
THE FUTURE OF INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT
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EDGE
DREAMCAST ■ PLAYSTATION ■ PS2 ■ N64 ■ PC ■ X-BOX ■ DOLPHIN
Project Eden
Core's killer PlayStation2 comeback
(Yes, this is an actual screenshot)
The future of PlayStation2
Games as TV shows, the synthesis model and
eliminating jaggies: the inside story at Sony
Dreamcast overload
F355, 18 Wheeler and Out Trigger:
the Naomi romance blossoms
Previewed
Shadow of Destiny
World Sports Cars
Metropolis Street Racer
Seven Blades
Moho
Reviewed
Perfect Dark
Power Stone 2
Driving Emotion Type-S
Ecco the Dolphin
Fur Fighters


(85 × 24)
−137



It must be difficult working at Core Design. One minute you're pumping out cheap 16bit platformers like *Chuck Rock* and *Rick Dangerous*, the next you're in bed with Sega as one of the most prolific exponents of software for its Mega CD add-on. Then, as the prospect of a *Thunderhawk* sequel looms ever larger (the rent has to be paid, after all), an artist just happens to indulge a whim on his sketchpad, and an icon is born. Then it's all press junkets to Cairo, cruises up the Nile, camel rides to the Great Pyramids, and home in time for tea during which you idly leaf through an Elite Models catalogue in an effort to find a human face for the monster you have unleashed.

But while Core retains the spirit that put Lara Croft on a hundred magazine covers (the company has just signed up the fourth real-life model to fill her boots), *Tomb Raider* is yesterday's news to a certain group of creatives at the company – the same group, in fact, who were responsible for her first outing, but none since.

Today this team is setting out to prove that Core is far from the one-trick pony that cynics so love to term it. In *Project Eden*, this month's cover game, there's not a green spandex top nor cutesy little backpack in sight. Read **Edge**'s exclusive report on p50.

Project Eden's host platform, PlayStation2, is also examined in some detail this issue (see p60). Sadly, for the second month running **Edge**'s proposed Dreamcast feature had to be pulled at the last minute. Hopefully the Naomi feature (see p42) will appease Sega fans in its place.

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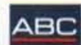
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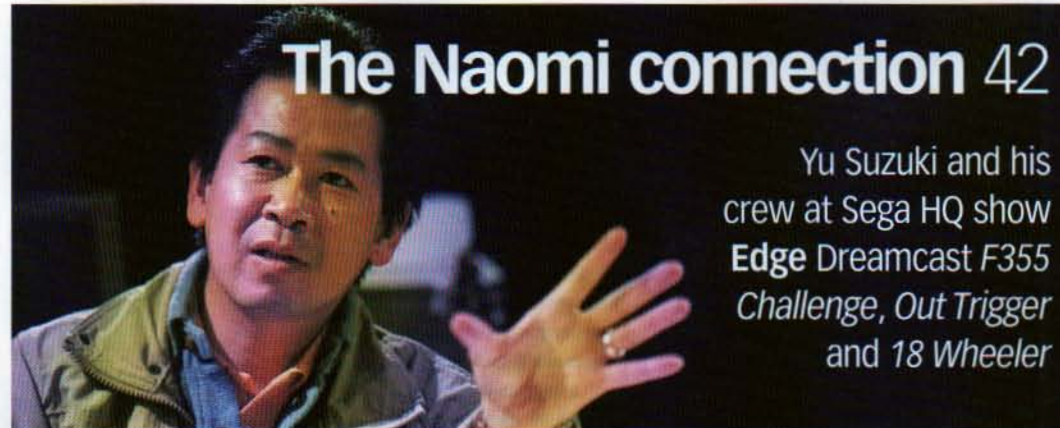
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(Audit Bureau of Circulation)

Project Eden 50

When the original *Tomb Raider* team shifted its focus to PlayStation2, this is what happened...



The Naomi connection 42

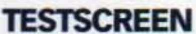
Yu Suzuki and his crew at Sega HQ show **Edge** Dreamcast *F355 Challenge*, *Out Trigger* and *18 Wheeler*

The future of PlayStation2 60



Edge travels to San Francisco to discover how Phil Harrison is mapping out Sony's superconsole destiny

TESTSCREEN



The planet's most authoritative videogame reviews section







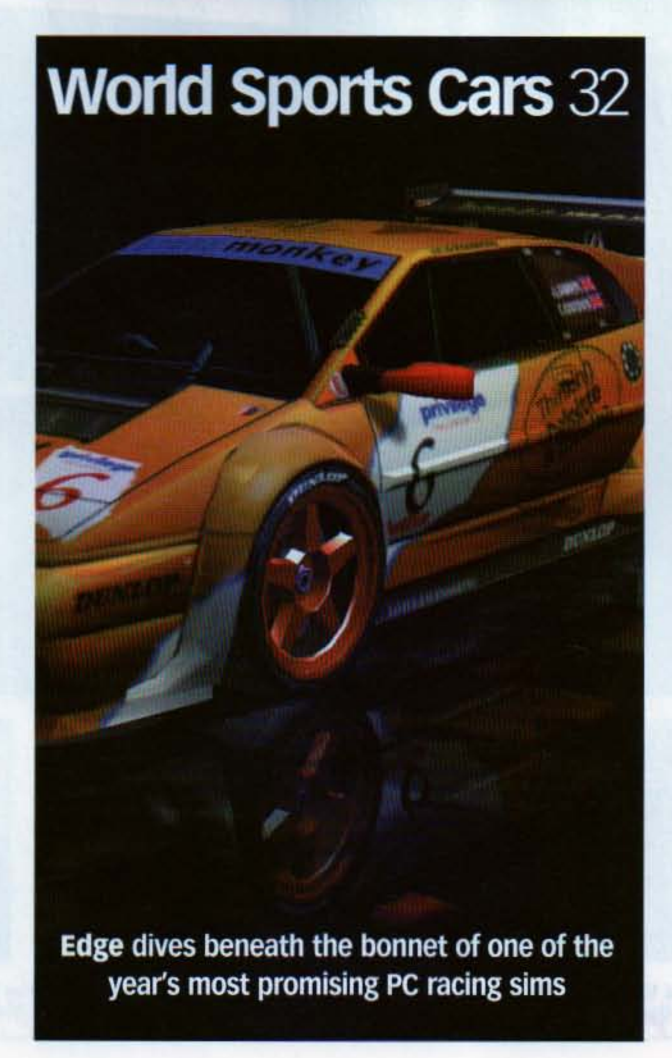


PRESCREEN 15

Konami's next PS2 title emerges alongside Climax's DC horror, *Illbleed*, while *MSR* returns

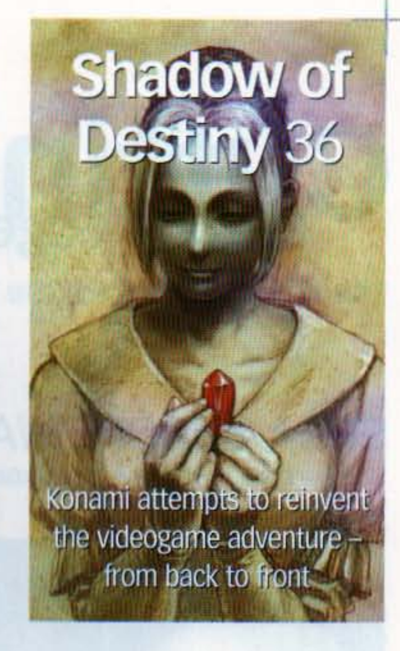


World Sports Cars 32



Edge dives beneath the bonnet of one of the year's most promising PC racing sims

Shadow of Destiny 36



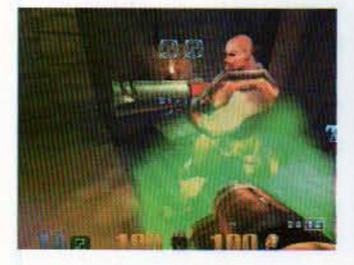
Konami attempts to reinvent the videogame adventure – from back to front

Cutting Edge

The latest news from the world of interactive entertainment

SEGA EUROPE WAKES UP FROM ONLINE DREAM

Plans for multiplayer online Dreamcast games slowly emerge, but lag behind those in the US and Japan

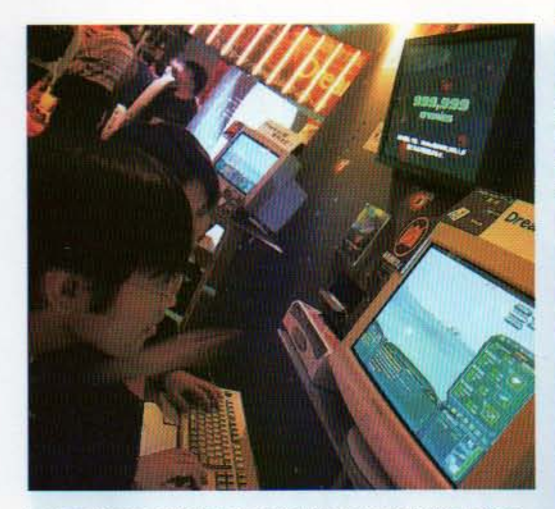








Online gaming proved to be the main focus for Sega at this spring's Tokyo Game Show. Several titles have been lined up to showcase Dreamcast's multiplayer facilities, including (from left) *Quake III, Phantasy Star Online, Marvel Vs Capcom 2* and *Chu Chu Rocket*. Most are confirmed for the UK



Sega threw anything and everything vaguely DC online-related on to the floor at TGS – and it seemed to work



With online gaming becoming a key rallying cry for Sega's Japanese and American divisions, Sega Europe is preparing to come out of the multiplayer closet and present its Internet games. As expected, support for online play has been low key to date, with the recent launch of several 'lite' games designed to whet players' appetites before the big launch of *Chu Chu Rocket* on May 26. **Edge** has heard from a reliable source that Sega is planning a major marketing push for the title in Europe, but the company refuses to disclose exactly what this will entail.

For now, then, European gamers will have to content themselves with the mini-games available free through Dreamcast's Web portal, dreamarena. Created by Guildford online game specialist Fiendish Entertainment, the range of five titles includes Battleships and Connect Four derivatives, as well as a sliding puzzle featuring Sonic the Hedgehog, and a simple pub quiz offering prizes for the cleverest competitors. Although this may sound like a rather limp introduction to online gaming, it's worth pointing out that the likes of chequers, Go! and chess remain massively popular online games for the PC and Mac. Indeed, the biggest online title in the world is not *Quake III* or *Unreal Tournament*, but *Hearts* on the Microsoft gaming network – no latency, no twitch gaming skills required. Perhaps Sega Europe is hoping to shimmy in on this low-expectations market.

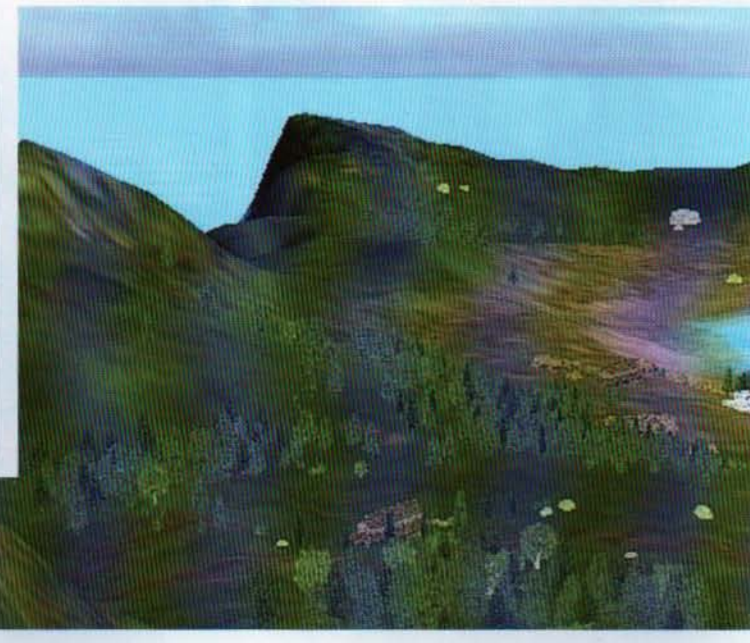
Sega is keeping the process as intuitive as possible to avoid the esoteric nightmare that is PC multiplayer gaming,thereby persuading mainstream gamers to increase their phone bills

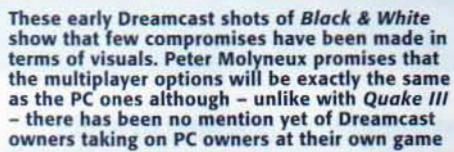
Up next will be *Chu Chu Rocket*, Sega's devilishly addictive fourplayer puzzle game. If the US release is anything to go by, the game should feature a seamless online option allowing players to simply click on an 'Online' icon, meet up with other gamers in the chat room and then either set up a new game or join one already in progress (each game will also include a skill level indicator). Sega is keeping the



Heat.Net, Sega's successful online gaming site, is branching across from the PC to DC. *10six* is a realtime strategy game of exploration and combat, and will be the first title to make the leap across to the console







These early Dreamcast shots of *Black & White* show that few compromises have been made in terms of visuals. Peter Molyneux promises that the multiplayer options will be exactly the same as the PC ones although – unlike with *Quake III* – there has been no mention yet of Dreamcast owners taking on PC owners at their own game

process as simple and intuitive as possible to avoid the esoteric nightmare that is PC multiplayer gaming, thereby persuading mainstream gamers to increase their phone bills.

After *Chu Chu Rocket*, though, the battle plan becomes blurred, as Sega Europe is being kept silent by its parent in Japan. However, the company will be showing off the *Mario Party*-style game *Sonic Shuffle* at E3, which presents players with around 50 mini-games – along the same lines as those in Nintendo's fun title – and includes an online multiplayer option. **Edge** has discovered *Sonic Shuffle* is highly likely to be the second big online title in Europe, but details are sparse at present. More details in **Edge**'s E3 report next month.

The international picture

Although Sega Europe has been reluctant to give out too much information concerning the dawn of online console multiplayer gaming here, in Japan and the US the concept has become a major marketing boast.

Sega Japan's stand at the spring Tokyo Game Show was literally bursting with online titles, including the likes of *Dee Dee Planet*, *Net Golf* and *Sega Tetris* (all due over the next couple of months in Japan as multiplayer titles), dominating the inside of the complex. The company also revealed more information on its DreamLibrary initiative: a selection of classic Mega Drive and TurboGrafx 16 games downloadable from the Web. Gamers will be able to get online using the next version of Japan's Dream Passport disc, access the DreamLibrary and download the likes of *Phantasy Star II*, *R-Type* and *Puyo Puyo* (there are currently around 30 games to choose from) into the Dreamcast's RAM. The game will stay there until the machine is switched off, and the service should cost around ¥150 per title.

Other companies have also hopped on board the eastern online express. Capcom recently put *Marvel vs Capcom 2* up on to its own highspeed network with great success (despite a few early technical jitters and some latency problems), and forthcoming titles such as *SNK Vs Capcom* and *Street Fighter 3rd Strike* will inevitably follow. Plus, Hudson's *Diablo*-esque *Rune Jade*, due out in the summer, will be the first online RPG for a console, and is looking good, if a little derivative. Also due for Japanese release in the summer is *www.soccer* – an online football management sim that hails from developer Clean Fight.

In the US, Sega has gone as far as to set up a new company, Sega.Com, to handle the Internet aspect of the business. Sega.Com even boasts its own ISP, Sega.net, designed specifically with DC gamers in mind. Dreamcast owners who sign up to the service get a $200 rebate on their console and – when the service launches on September 7 – will be able to play the likes of *Quake III*, *NBA 2K1* and *Phantasy Star* as well as access chat rooms, lifestyle news and ecommerce as part of the deal. Software support for DC online gaming is also shaping up in the States, where the machine has been hugely successful. Crave's *Soldier of Fortune* conversion will feature online play, as will all of Ripcord's forthcoming DC titles, including *Legend of the Blade Masters* and *Spec Ops Online*.

Further into the future, the only Dreamcast titles with multiplayer online facilities confirmed for UK release this year are *Quake III* and *Black & White* – both due in the autumn. The *QIII* conversion is being handled by Hammerhead under the supervision of John Carmack and is set to include exclusive new arenas, improved textures and lighting effects, and a host of other new features. The team is also working on creating a highly intuitive interface and smooth gameplay, although players set to access the game through the standard UK phone system should probably prepare themselves for narrow-bandwidth latency. Meanwhile, *Black & White* is set to offer all the multiplayer features of the PC version (specifically, the Gathering and *Black & White* World options) and early tests of online play have been successful.

Also on the horizon are the many US games set to include multiplayer options (see the report next month for details) as well as the formidable *Phantasy Star Online* from Sonic Team. Sega has talked about a worldwide simultaneous release for the latter, and as it's set on Japanese release schedules for autumn, this may well turn up on European shelves sooner than Dreamcast owners could have hoped. This ingenious RPG, which has gamers getting into groups of four and investigating a massive explosion on a far-off planet, uses an icon-driven communication system to get around the international language barrier. Little else is known as yet, but the videoscreen showing footage of the game was constantly swamped by eager gamers at the Tokyo Game Show, and **Edge**'s own experience of the title bodes well.

So, as far as Europe is concerned it's a slim line-up, but one that's varied and filled with triple-A material, and there are more Japanese and American titles to come. If Sega Europe has a marketing plan to match the quality of these, online console gaming could well provide the boost Dreamcast needs at this pre-PS2 point in time.

SPOTLIGHT REFOCUSES ON VIOLENT VIDEOGAMES

Wolfenstein 3D and *Myst* come out of the cupboard to cause yet more media outrage

The amount of research examining links between violent videogames and aggression in children is likely to increase over the next few years. New studies published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* have made headline news and fuelled fears that stricter censorship may be enforced to cut down on violent content in videogames.

The studies conducted by Dr Craig Anderson of Iowa State University and Dr Karen Dill of Lenoir-Rhyne College warn that the medium is potentially more pernicious than exposure to violent films and television. The first piece of research was a simple correlation study which asked the subjects to answer questions on their academic records, aggression levels, videogame preferences and amount of time spent playing games. Perhaps unsurprisingly Dr Anderson reported that 'the amount of time playing video games was associated with lower academic grades'.

The second asked subjects to 'punish' a hidden opponent by blasting them with a 'noxious white noise' after playing either *Wolfenstein 3D* or *Myst*. The subjects of the *Wolfenstein* group emitted blasts averaging 6.81 seconds, the *Myst* group 6.65 seconds. Dr Dill concluded from these figures that 'violent videogames provide a forum for learning and practising aggressive solutions to conflict'.

The research makes direct reference to the teenage murders in Colorado in which Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold killed 13 fellow students. *Doom* is cited as a factor which may have been instrumental in their psychopathic behaviour.

Dr Guy Cumerbatch, who appeared on Channel 4's 'Right to Reply' to denounce the 'Dispatches' Video Nasties programme (see News **E**85) was equally unimpressed by this new research. He said: "You cannot simulate in a laboratory the complex social problems that people are concerned about, and overall the actual evidence supporting a link between media violence and real violence is very weak."

Though a developmental effect of violent games on children remains a concern to psychologists, many believe that the research conducted to date has been simplistic. "The younger you are, the more effect videogames will have on you," maintains **Dr Mark Griffiths**, head of psychology at Nottingham Trent University. "But the idea that human behaviour is due to one isolated factor is ridiculous."

He makes a convincing argument against cross-sectional studies and for longitudinal studies 'where it is possible to follow a group of children over a long period of time'.

The Anderson/Dill research can be found at www.apa.org/journals/psp/psp784772.html.

Subjects were asked to 'punish' a hidden opponent by blasting them with 'noxious white noise'. Dr Dill concluded from this that 'violent games provide a forum for learning aggressive solutions to conflict'





***Wolfenstein 3D* and *Myst* were chosen because of their 'close match'. Dill believes that they both share the same walkthrough format**

The Anderson questionnaire

1. Name your five favourite videogames.
2. How often do you play them?
3. From 1 to 7, rate their violent content.
4. How safe would you feel walking home at night on campus?
5. What do you think the chances are that any one women will be raped in her lifetime?



The evolution of a psychopath? No one would expect a murder to be commited with a Microsoft mouse, yet the theory that teenage murderers such as Klebold and Harris were not only influenced by videogames but were actively 'educated' by them in the use of firearms is prevalent in America

NEW WAVE OF PC 3D SIGNALS VIDEO CARD BATTLES

ATI and 3dfx present new products in New Orleans, but nVidia steals show with its GeForce2 GTS



***The Isle of Morg*, a demo created by The Whole Experience to show GeForce 2's per-pixel shading and hardware T&L (left: features disabled; above: enabled)**

The Windows Hardware Engineering Conference (WinHEC), which took place at the end of April in New Orleans, witnessed a flurry of announcements from competing 3D graphics hardware developers targeting the high-end user. Kicking off, 3dfx announced the Voodoo5 6000, which promises to deliver a fill rate of between 1.33 and 1.47 gigatexels per second, backed up by a set of features including full scene anti-aliasing and 3dfx's proprietary T-buffer digital cinematic effects engine. But while 3dfx has a well-established brand, nVidia's latest chip, the GeForce2 GTS, is more impressive. The successor to its GeForce 256 graphics processor unit boasts a fill rate of 1.6 gigatexels per second – compared with 480 megatexels for the 256 – and a clock speed of 200MHz. The chip is optimised for Microsoft DirectX and SGI OpenGL APIs, and features architecture consistent with that of previous nVidia chips alongside a unified driver setup. The most important new feature added to the hardware transform and lighting of its predecessor is per-pixel shading technology, enabled by the nVidia Shading Rasterizer (NSR). **Patrick Moynihan** of The Whole Experience, a development team based in Seattle, has worked with nVidia and its new chip and is very positive: "The nice









***Evolva* is the first game to take full advantage of the GeForce NSR capabilities. The level of detail is greatly enhanced through the nVidia feature set. Microsoft's X-Box will use a more advanced nVidia chip, of course**

With ATI's key frame interpolation technology (above), intermediate frames of animation are the remit of the chip itself

thing about the GeForce chipset is that the features that are supported on the NV10 and NV15 chipsets are all tightly integrated with DirectX. Working with the GeForce chipset was extremely easy. The major feature on the original GeForce was the transform and lighting. On the GeForce 2 GTS they have almost doubled the performance of the transform and lighting engine, but also the pixel shading stuff is really impressive. Our programmers are so excited about what we're going to be able to do with that. It's not just a one-off simple effect, it's like a construction kit for developing surface shaders that is very customisable. Essentially you can combine seven different pixel render stages per pixel pipeline – there are four of them – and it allows you to create some sophisticated lighting effects that are much more similar to prerendered per pixel lighting effects.

"At the very basic level we can simulate things like phong shading and per-pixel specular highlights, but that's just the tip of the iceberg. There's so much opportunity to mix and match those pixel shader pipelines in different ways that we really haven't yet figured out what sort of things we can do with it. The opportunity is there to explore it and set things up in different ways to see what kinds of effect you can achieve."

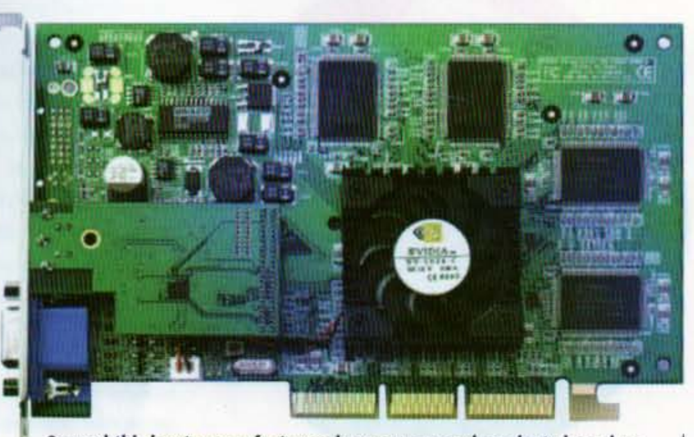
A number of PC OEMs and thirdparty board manufacturers have announced support for nVidia, including Dell, Gateway, Compaq, Hewlett-Packard, and Creative.

ATI, meanwhile, is bullish about its Radeon 256 chip, which also supports hardware transform and lighting with a fill rate of 1.5 Gigatexels per second. ATI's **Mark Holmes** is confident, and points to a feature set that he believes is competitive with nVidia: "We support all three different types of bump mapping, whereas I believe nVidia just supports two. We've also introduced key frame interpolation, which is another way of making the software coder's job easier. The feature set is certainly much more rich than the NV15."

Indeed, with these cards now approaching such speeds, the feature set is now all important, but it will be the software developers who decide which is the most useful.



ATI will manufacture add-in boards based on the Radeon 256 chip itself



Several thirdparty manufacturers have announced products based on the nVidia chip. ELSA's GLADIAC boards are already available in the US

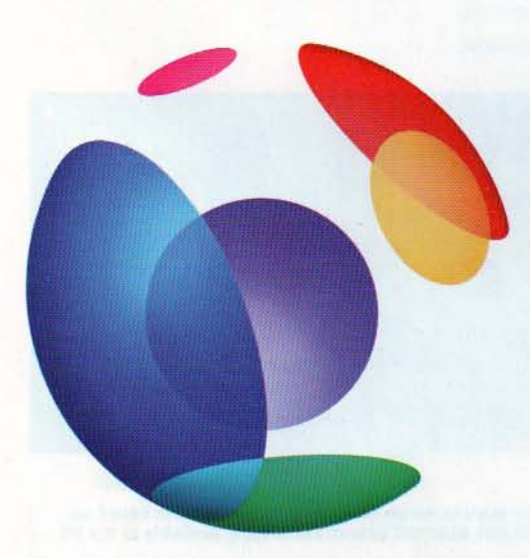
BROADBAND SET FOR UK VIA BT SERVICE IN JULY

Online gamers poised to enjoy always-on, high-speed connection to the Internet for £40 per month

After successful trials of ADSL technology, BT will launch its massmarket broadband portal and access service in July, under the brand BTopenworld. For £40 per month customers will benefit from always-on, high-speed connection to the Internet. An installation fee of £150 will be waived if customers order before June 30. Residential customers will initially be offered 512Kbps access (256Kbps upstream), though from the autumn connection speeds will increase. Eventually it is hoped that the development of a Personal openworld Portal will enable users to access personalised content through their mobile phones and TVs.

Bob Foster, general manager for Internet and multimedia applications at BTopenworld, told **Edge** what he thinks will be the major implications of the service for online gamers: "One is that it will reduce the latency for conventional gaming, because the network is very fast. It also allows you to have thin client games, where the game can be run on the server and it will be the image of the game that will be sent to you. Because the image can be sent to you fast enough you can still interact in realtime and see the game. So it will allow multiplayer games where the actual gaming engine and images are all produced on a central server and the images sent out to the players. That's almost an expansion of the sort of ways in which you can do gaming. It also allows you to start spectating online games – which I think is as yet untapped. For example, somebody could watch two people playing *Doom* even if they didn't have *Doom* running on their PC at all. What they'd be sent is the video image of the screen. And because the bandwidth is fast enough you can get good enough quality video that you could watch the game."

Foster also expects the service to affect the way software is distributed: "It's much more feasible to buy games on the network and buy the first level, or get a free download which is the first couple of levels of a game, see if you like it and then buy the whole game. In fact, I think probably the key thing that it's going to do for games is the ability to download software very rapidly. I can see the whole distribution of gaming changing with this sort of technology."









British Telecom has signed content deals with more than 50 partners, including Gameplay.com and Gameswire.com

"Somebody could watch two people playing *Doom* even if they didn't have *Doom* on their PC at all. What they'd be sent is the video image of the screen"

It isn't clear how the move to broadband will affect BT's existing relationship with Sega, but according to senior vice president for content **John Raczka**, "That relationship is simply being explored to be taken in other directions. We are currently actively exploring content relationships both with Sega and other major console players." Given the commitment of both Sony and Microsoft to broadband connectivity, it will be interesting to see whether they will strike distribution deals with BT when their consoles are released in the UK.

Finally, UK gamers will soon be able to enjoy Internet access at the sort of speeds their American counterparts have benefited from for some time, though the news isn't all good. Some customers will have to wait up to six months to access the service. Initially available to only 35 per cent of homes in the UK, by the end of next year this figure is expected to have increased to 70 per cent. More than 35,000 people have registered an interest, and BT will be taking preorders online at www.btopenworld.com.



The Openworld brand will be marketed throughout the UK

PRESCREEN

EDGE PREMIERES INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT'S FRESHEST FACES

REPLAY? YES/NO

Trimming down the flab in videogames

Is there anything more hateful in a game than once having completed it being told to go through the whole thing all over again? More insulting still is being motivated to do so by the offer of an extra weapon or, if you're really lucky, a change of costume for the next circuit. This is a very rotten carrot indeed. The fact is, unless you have a very distorted sense of pride, playing through a game for the second or third time, even one of the calibre of *Metal Gear Solid*, ultimately proves unrewarding. In today's climate there are simply too many other hot games screaming for attention to warrant such an indulgence.

Replay value is too often used as a means not to improve the essence of gameplay but to counter accusations of questionable longevity. In *Metal Gear Solid* this is excusable; in *Blue Stinger* it is not. Frankly, if a game cannot offer a decent ten-hour experience the first time around it's hardly going to improve matters by changing the colour of your character's pants for the second.

Recently a developer told **Edge** that *Tony Hawk's Skateboarding* is the lunchtime game of choice. All the challenges have been completed, all the modes exhausted, yet the title still prevents more recently acclaimed games from usurping its position in the PlayStation disc drive. It is the fundamental principle of the gameplay experience that demands further attention. Because *Tony Hawk's Skateboarding* is simply sheer fun to play, 'external' goals are applied. Collecting every single tape within the career mode inside 40 minutes is the current challenge.

But is this just a question of game styles? While you would expect *Street Fighter III Third Strike* to offer short bursts of addictive, competitive gameplay which will keep you coming back for more, *Final Fantasy IX* threatens to take up just as much time with its narrative pull.

Bruno Bonnell has enraged some segments of the gaming community by calling on developers to shorten their development periods and, in turn, reduce the length of games. In theory this may actually be no bad thing. Square and SCEI's corporate machines will always provide the sweeping epics; other smaller development teams might be better reigning in their ambition and producing games which demand your time because of sublime core game mechanics rather than flabby and clichéd storylines. In reality, when was the last time you played a narrative-driven title through for a second time?

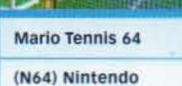




No one would question the ability of *Metal Gear Solid* and *Final Fantasy IX* to hold your attention for prolonged periods. *Tony Hawk's Skateboarding*, however, can prove more absorbing than both

Edge's most wanted

Identifying the hottest incoming blips

	 	  	 
Time Splitters	**World Sports Cars**	**Mario Tennis 64**	**MSR**
(PS2) Eidos	**(PC) Empire**	**(N64) Nintendo**	**(DC) Sega**
Having undergone a slight name change since its appearance last month, this remains one of the most intriguing FPSs to emerge in recent times.	Realistic simulations are only as good as their dynamics. If current form is anything to go by the West brothers' effort is firmly set for greatness.	History has shown that tennis games often work best when they don't take themselves too seriously. Don't expect Mario et al to go changing the trend.	Looking scarily realistic, Bizarre Creations' racer is promising revolutionary features when it hits the streets in July. **Edge** might take a look beforehand.

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PRESCREEN ALPHAS

METROPOLIS STREET RACER CONTINUES TO IMPRESS AS KONAMI RETURNS TO THE 17TH CENTURY IN SEVEN BLADES

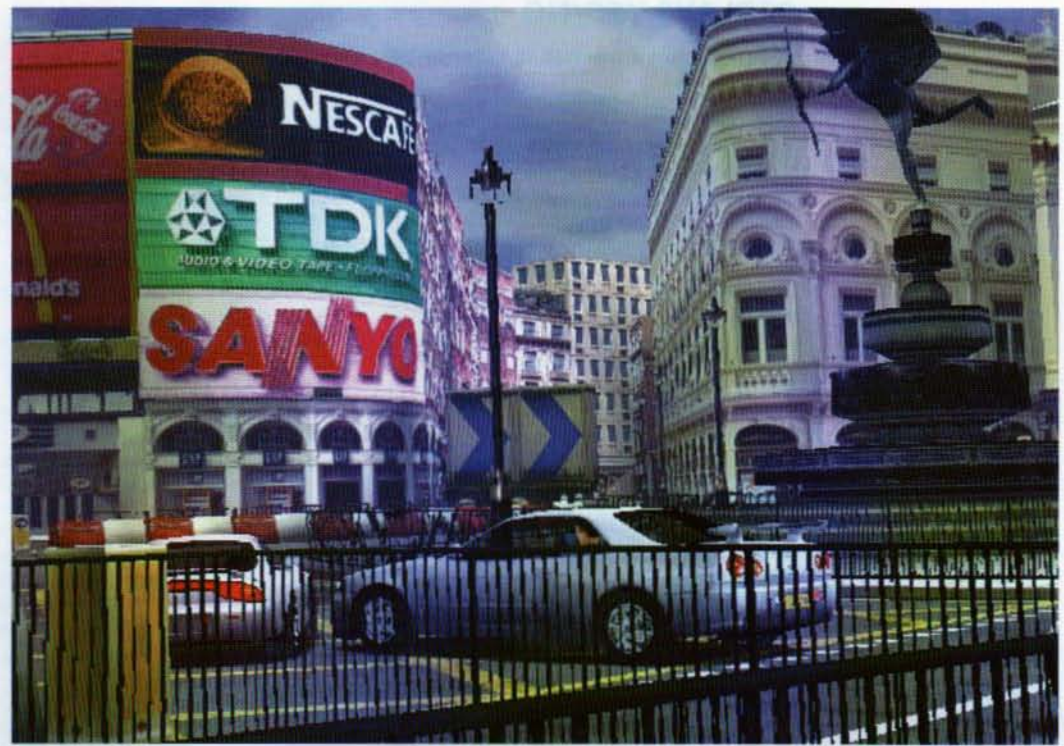
METROPOLIS STREET RACER

FORMAT: **DC** DEVELOPER: **BIZARRE CREATIONS**





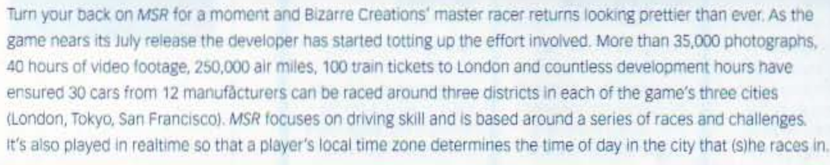












Turn your back on *MSR* for a moment and Bizarre Creations' master racer returns looking prettier than ever. As the game nears its July release the developer has started totting up the effort involved. More than 35,000 photographs, 40 hours of video footage, 250,000 air miles, 100 train tickets to London and countless development hours have ensured 30 cars from 12 manufacturers can be raced around three districts in each of the game's three cities (London, Tokyo, San Francisco). *MSR* focuses on driving skill and is based around a series of races and challenges. It's also played in realtime so that a player's local time zone determines the time of day in the city that (s)he races in.

SEVEN BLADES

FORMAT: **PLAYSTATION2** DEVELOPER: **KONAMI**















Set in 1640 during the Tokugawa regime's policy of excluding foreigners from mainland Japan, the action in *Seven Blades* occurs on the island of Dejima, reserved for a Dutch trading post. This nod towards historical authenticity is quickly undermined, though. A male protagonist specialising in close combat weaponry is able to transform into a robot, while the physical weakness of a female character is compensated for by increased firepower, including access to machine guns. Action is akin to *Tomb Raider*, though with players able to switch between the two heroes it's hoped the finished title will offer a little more finesse.

MARIO TENNIS 64

FORMAT: **NINTENDO 64** DEVELOPER: **CAMELOT**









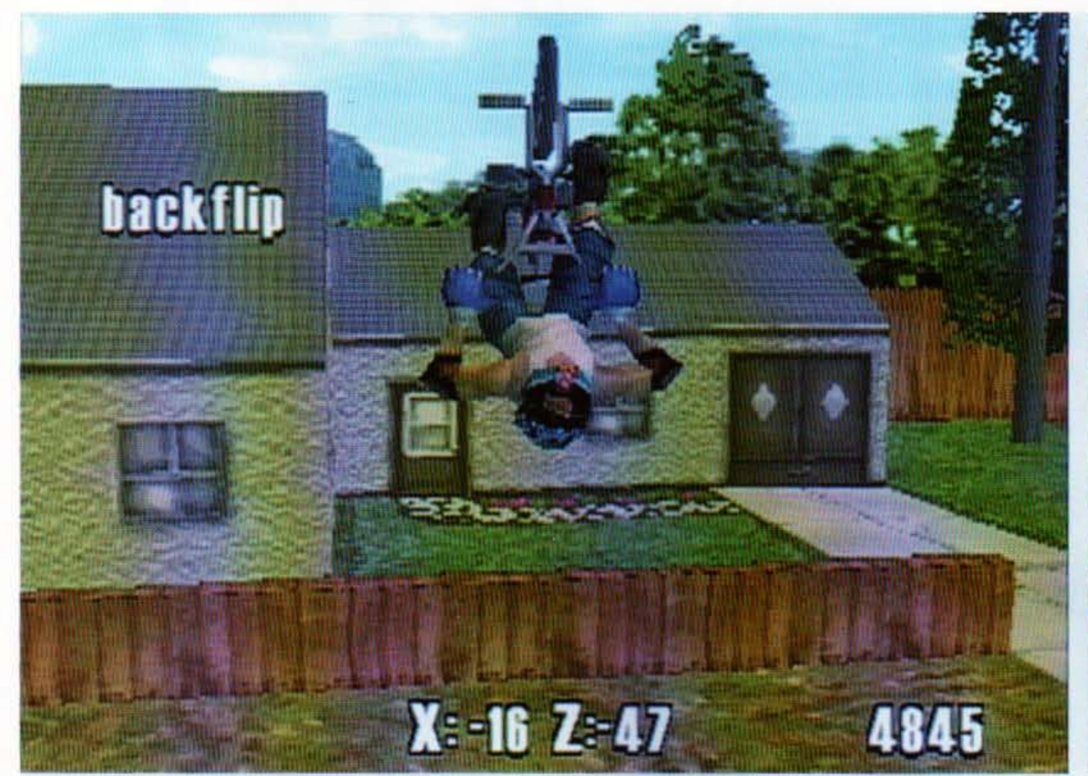




If *Mario Golf* is anything to go by, this offering from Nintendo is destined to break a few LTA rules. Hitting the ball at the speed of light and producing fireballs are just two of the more fanciful features. Though the gameplay will be simplistic, one button for slice shots another for high shots will enable a range of strokes. The usual suspects return with the addition of Waluigi – Luigi's dark 'twin'. Even Yoshi has been included – though how he employs the racket will be interesting to see. With a fourplayer option and talk of Game Boy compatibility, *Mario Tennis* should rival the realistic *Virtua Tennis*.

DAVE MIRRA FREESTYLE BMX

FORMAT: **PLAYSTATION** DEVELOPER: **Z-AXIS**

















Brought to you by the people behind the over-technical yet likeable *Thrasher: Skate & Destroy*, this BMX title features nine world class riders in addition to the eponymous ten-times world champion. An open trick system lets you start with simple tricks before using modifiers to massively expand your repertoire, and gameplay is looking promising. Scheduled for an autumn release, the title's set to go head to head against a forthcoming Matt Hofman-licensed game from *Tony Hawk's Skateboarding* developer Neversoft.

COMMANDOS 2

FORMAT: **PC** DEVELOPER: **PYRO STUDIOS**





Commandos: Behind Enemy Lines met with sufficient success to merit an expansion pack and, as first reported in **E**83, now a sequel. A new game engine has been designed, and alongside the familiar 'Dirty Half Dozen' will be a few new faces. The tactical combat sim genre has become somewhat overcrowded since the first title appeared, but with the action observed from an isometric viewpoint, Pyro is hoping that a wider range of difficulty levels, enhanced graphics, fluid character animations and superior enemy AI will impress over the 3D graphics of its competitors. This game should be as CPU-friendly as its prequel, too, which naturally ramps up its appeal to owners of ageing machines.

ONE/FOURTH

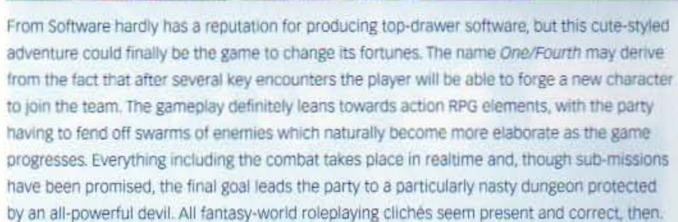
FORMAT: **PLAYSTATION2** DEVELOPER: **FROM SOFTWARE**











From Software hardly has a reputation for producing top-drawer software, but this cute-styled adventure could finally be the game to change its fortunes. The name *One/Fourth* may derive from the fact that after several key encounters the player will be able to forge a new character to join the team. The gameplay definitely leans towards action RPG elements, with the party having to fend off swarms of enemies which naturally become more elaborate as the game progresses. Everything including the combat takes place in realtime and, though sub-missions have been promised, the final goal leads the party to a particularly nasty dungeon protected by an all-powerful devil. All fantasy-world roleplaying clichés seem present and correct, then.

STREET FIGHTER III: THIRD STRIKE

FORMAT: **DREAMCAST** DEVELOPER: **CAPCOM**

The most exciting prospect *Street Fighter III Third Strike* presents will be the ability to prove your beat 'em up mettle online. Rather than offering a tournament or Vs mode, Capcom has endevoured to craft a combat rating mechanism which it has christened the 'Grade Judge System'. A rank will be awarded to the player based on parameters such as combat style, seconds remaining, technique and energy left. Certain *Street Fighter* series favourites, such as Chun-Li and Ken, make a welcome return, while four newcomers are introduced to make up a total of 19. Bonus characters will also be available. Clearly, this should be the most visually accomplished instalment of the series to date.





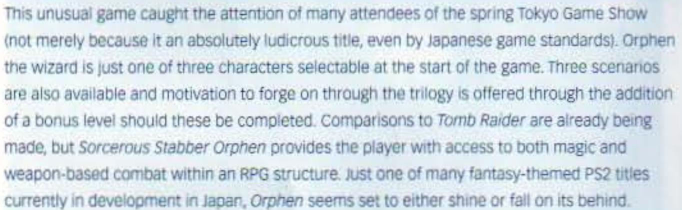
SORCEROUS STABBER ORPHEN

FORMAT: **PLAYSTATION2** DEVELOPER: **KADOKAWA**









This unusual game caught the attention of many attendees of the spring Tokyo Game Show (not merely because it an absolutely ludicrous title, even by Japanese game standards). Orphen the wizard is just one of three characters selectable at the start of the game. Three scenarios are also available and motivation to forge on through the trilogy is offered through the addition of a bonus level should these be completed. Comparisons to *Tomb Raider* are already being made, but *Sorcerous Stabber Orphen* provides the player with access to both magic and weapon-based combat within an RPG structure. Just one of many fantasy-themed PS2 titles currently in development in Japan, *Orphen* seems set to either shine or fall on its behind.

PROJECT IGI

FORMAT: **PC** DEVELOPER: **INNERLOOP**

Project IGI's levels can be approached in a variety of ways. Scout out an enemy compound, for instance, and the player can either attempt to take out sentries or avoid detection by observing the guards' patrols. Fences without barbed wire can be scaled, and bunkers can be negotiated using ladders. Planning and selecting weapons for the task in hand will be crucial. Great emphasis is being placed on bullet physics; most objects in the game will react differently to the calibre employed. Flimsy corrugated iron should crumple under heavy fire, whereas steel girders can cause bullets to ricochet. While this 'shooter thinker' looked impressive when **Edge** last played it (**E**84), its AI and physics engine still appear to need work.









FINAL FANTASY IX

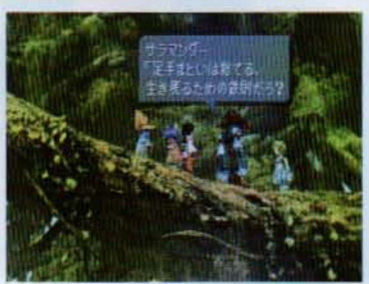
FORMAT: **PLAYSTATION** DEVELOPER: **SQUARESOFT**



The return of Yoshitaka Amano to artistic duties on *Final Fantasy IX* marks a reintroduction of the swords and sorcery feel of earlier instalments in the series. There will be eight characters in total, each able to learn special abilities by picking up the various weapons on offer. The same weapon can bestow a different ability depending on the person using it, and if a weapon ability is used often enough it becomes permanent and can be utilised without equipping the weapon. This should be the best-looking episode to appear on the PlayStation and, despite the impending introduction of PS2, will no doubt appeal to fans of the series and could even sell as many as part seven did.







ILLBLEED

FORMAT: **DREAMCAST** DEVELOPER: **CLIMAX GRAPHICS**

Coming from the developer responsible for the disappointing *Blue Stinger*, *Illbleed*'s narrative focuses on a horror theme park where visitors are offered $1m if they make it through the haunted house alive. With less emphasis on action than previous survival horror experiences, you're free to move around the house – which has been designed to shock and kill – with some 1,500 events promised to trouble you at various points. Even if you successfully avoid the lethal traps, some of the more stressful events have a detrimental effect on your character's heart rate and blood pressure (shown as gauges onscreen). Let these get too high and you'll either faint of suffer cardiac arrest. Presumably only in the game, though.







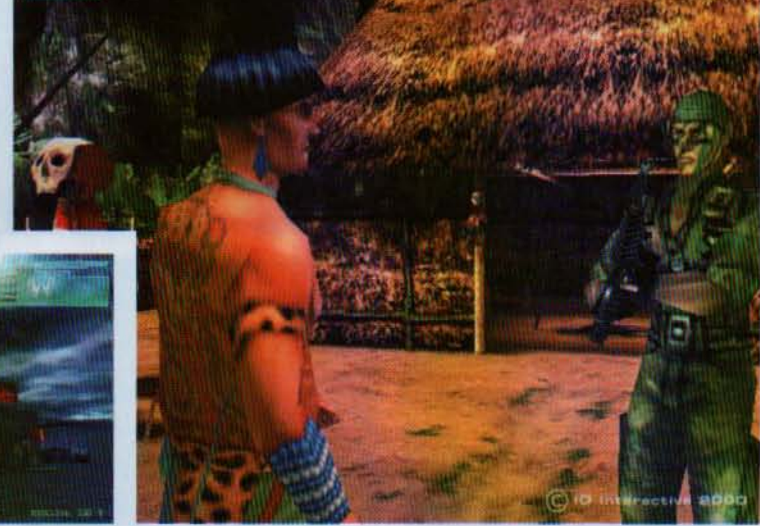


HITMAN: CODENAME 47

FORMAT: **PC** DEVELOPER: **IO INTERACTIVE**



Attempting to inject a level of realism to a game about the morally dubious profession of the assassin is asking for trouble, but *Hitman: Codename 47* should also bring a few challenges to mature gamers. As in real life one of these will be the disposal of dead bodies, but this is set to be just one of a multitude of tactical problems which will have to be overcome by the use of stealth. It is not clear whether the *Soldier of Fortune* path of gratuitous gore will be taken, or indeed if blood stains will have to be cleared up behind you, but this title will have Middle England gnashing its teeth when it makes its debut. **Edge** readers will, however, be able to judge dispassionately whether playability matches ambition.







ARMORED CORE 2

FORMAT: **PLAYSTATION2** DEVELOPER: **FROM SOFTWARE**





The latest addition to the canon of Japanese mech games will be the first title available for the PlayStation2 to use its iLink port to join two machines for multiplayer gameplay. The multiplayer version of the first *Armored Core* was one of its strong points, but there are a variety of play modes, including a Mission mode, to add oneplayer longevity here. Apart from that the game is an update of the original, though with a more sophisticated system of upgrading mechs to the extent that it is possible to create a personalised logo with a resolution of 128x128. Visuals, naturally, will be given the full PS2 treatment.



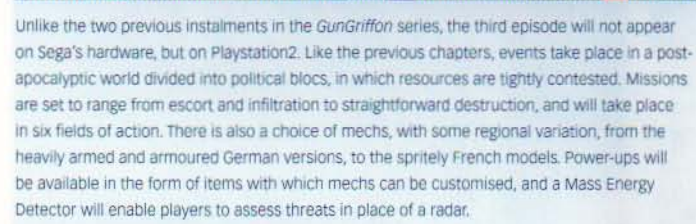
GUNGRIFFON BLAZE

FORMAT: **PLAYSTATION2** DEVELOPER: **GAME ARTS**









Unlike the two previous instalments in the *GunGriffon* series, the third episode will not appear on Sega's hardware, but on Playstation2. Like the previous chapters, events take place in a post-apocalyptic world divided into political blocs, in which resources are tightly contested. Missions are set to range from escort and infiltration to straightforward destruction, and will take place in six fields of action. There is also a choice of mechs, with some regional variation, from the heavily armed and armoured German versions, to the spritely French models. Power-ups will be available in the form of items with which mechs can be customised, and a Mass Energy Detector will enable players to assess threats in place of a radar.



ANACHRONOX

FORMAT: **PC** DEVELOPER: **ION STORM**



Ion Storm's *Quake II*-engined RPG draws ever nearer release. Set against the backdrop of a deserted alien city, the game features seven characters, up to three of which can be controlled at any one time. Despite using a firstperson shoot 'em up engine, the combat system is turn based, but features interactive environments. Notably there will not be any random combat encounters, and although scripted encounters should enable AI to be improved, it is too early to say whether this 'chance' element will be missed. Another innovative feature is the interface, which consists of a 3D digital representation of the hero's dead assistant. Depending on the success of the title, there are two sequels planned.

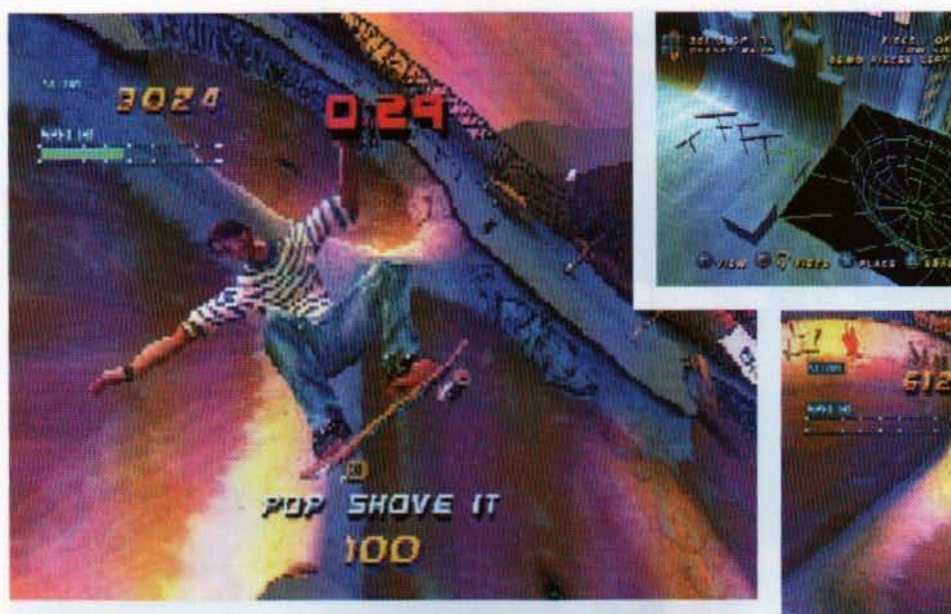




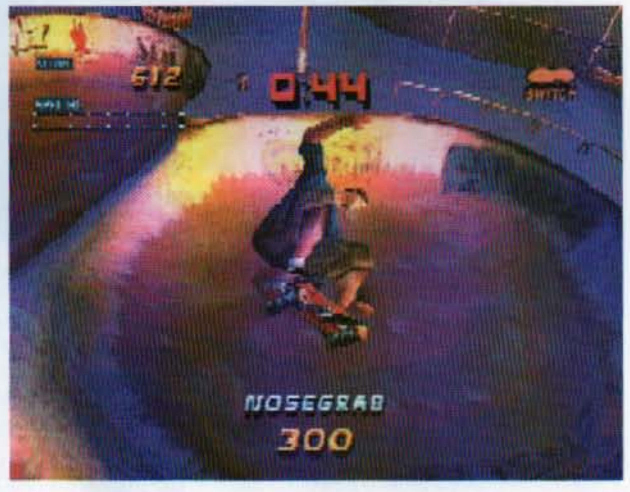


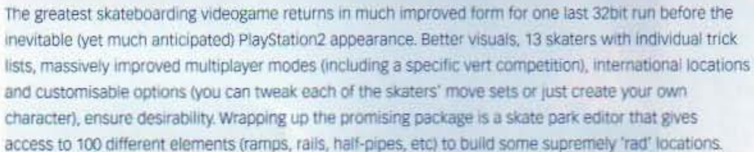
TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2

FORMAT: **PLAYSTATION** DEVELOPER: **NEVERSOFT**









The greatest skateboarding videogame returns in much improved form for one last 32bit run before the inevitable (yet much anticipated) PlayStation2 appearance. Better visuals, 13 skaters with individual trick lists, massively improved multiplayer modes (including a specific vert competition), international locations and customisable options (you can tweak each of the skaters' move sets or just create your own character), ensure desirability. Wrapping up the promising package is a skate park editor that gives access to 100 different elements (ramps, rails, half-pipes, etc) to build some supremely 'rad' locations.

GUNSPIKE

FORMAT: **DREAMCAST/COIN-OP** DEVELOPER: **CAPCOM**

Capcom will once again mine the seam of its established character roster for this 3D shoot 'em up, which will be released in Japan in both Dreamcast and Naomi-powered coin-op form. Arthur from *Ghouls & Ghosts* will be joined by Cammy and Nash of *Street Fighter Zero* fame, along with two new characters. Set in the future, the government has sent out a special Anti-Robot Force to do battle with terrorist criminals. Each character will have five different attacks, which should be familiar to fans of Capcom's previous games – Nash's Sonic Boom attack will feature, for example. The game will include network-play support, and cult status among Japanese Capcom fans seems assured.









STARTOPIA

FORMAT: **PC** DEVELOPER: **MUCKY FOOT**

Originally titled *Spacestation*, Mucky Foot has been forced to change the name of its forthcoming simulation/realtime strategy game for legal reasons. Players will have to renovate a series of space stations to attract passing aliens and create thriving intergalactic communities. It is anticipated that there will be eight races in the game, each with unique requirements. With a blend of resource management that befits a group of former Bullfrog staff, it is not yet clear what will prevent this from becoming a straightforward *Dungeon Keeper* in space, but there is still time to get this one right.





MOHO

Taking its lead from a number of diverse titles, Lost Toys is starting out in an ambitious mood with its future-world actioner. But will today's punters buy into it?









You're a criminal and, what's worse, you have to fight for your freedom. Fortunately, there's no Wolf or Sharron Davies among these gladiators

No need for biped worries such as running – in *MoHo* the characters use a rollerball mechanism

Lost Toys' first outing has taken influences from a rich range of genres. Look closely and it is possible to spot elements of *Spindizzy*, *Smash TV*, *Road Rash* and even *Tony Hawk's Skateboarding* making gameplay cameo appearances. This mixture of such diverse elements makes for an intriguing title, yet the PlayStation market has hardly been renowned for taking unusual concepts to its bosom. Shiny's *MDK* and *Wild 9*, though impressive in ambition, both failed to woo punters out of their cash.

Finding categorisation difficult, the ex-Bullfrog team prefer to label *MoHo* as an 'all-action arcade-style game set on a unique future world'. As a criminal of the state your only means of securing freedom is to enter the galaxy's gladitorial contests, which comprise of ten incarceration facilities containing the various battle arenas.

One of five characters can be chosen, each have differing physics properties and attack combos. Crucially, and this is *MoHo*'s real defining quality, the gladiators have one single rollerball mechanism to provide motion and impetus rather than a traditional bipedal mechanism. The momentum and smooth movement provided by negotiating curved surfaces and ramps has been implemented tremendously well. Take to the air after a particularly high jump and the camera follows the action smoothly. Control, too, is intuitive and responsive and *MoHo* certainly promises to have a great deal of pick-up-and-play value.

Variety is offered through giving the player a series of challenges inside each prison facility.

Much of the fun of *MoHo* may well derive not **from completing the level but in employing** strategies to beat the gold medal time

Depending on the difficulty level, anything from five to ten challenges will be available. Complete an allotted number and a new prison complex is opened up for play. This ensures that no single level will frustrate progress and, although around 80 levels will be available, only 85 per cent of them will have to be completed.

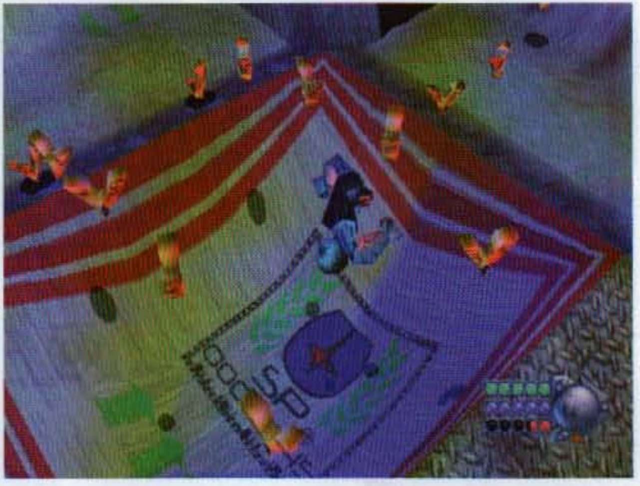
Challenges range from simple races to the finish line against robot competitors; fights to the death using clubs, mallets and swords; Powerball, which asks the player to collect spheres and hurl them onto metallic poles; and King Of The Hill, which, as the name suggests,

Format: **PlayStation**
Publisher: **Take Two**
Developer: **Lost Toys**
Release: **July**
Origin: **UK**



Use the beautifully realised morphing landscape for some aesthetic action. This can be brought about by destroying the powerball underneath your opponent





Despite the compact nature of the arenas, there's a challenge in trying to complete them in the quickest time, and a medal for the winner

demands that you must protect your high platform from the other marauding competitors.

The landscapes which must be negotiated can be as treacherous as your opponents and provide many of the gameplay nuances. Different textures affect the physics of the gladiator – rough patches of ground should be avoided if quick times are to be scored, and anything from ice to water impedes progress in both subtle and damaging ways. Though the chosen character has both a brake and damage gauge they deplete with overuse and hits from opponents respectively. The brakes, in particular, really must to be used sparingly. The lack of an instant stopping manoeuvre often results in wild leaps towards the end of particularly precarious arenas and this adds a refreshing strategical element to the gameplay.



***MoHo*'s greatest strength isn't its fighting elements, but the race for the finish line. A bonus 'golf' mode (not shown) proves terrific fun, too**

The arenas are very compact (most need to be completed within two minutes) and a gold medal will be awarded for super-fast times. Collect enough gold medals and bonus arenas become available. Indeed, much of the fun from *MoHo* may well derive not from completing the level but in employing strategies to beat the gold medal time. Attempting ambitious leaps or using the morphing landscape (an impressive-looking effect produced by destroying the powerball beneath an enemy) to find faster routes will be an incentive to replay many levels.

A comprehensive multiplayer split-screen mode is also available and runs at a brisk frame rate. Most of the challenges available in the singleplayer game can be accessed in multiplayer, and, while the fighting elements of the game are currently weak, the competition to find the quickest route to the finish line in the race games is both frantic and fun.

Less abstract than it was at the original concept stage, *MoHo* still remains an unusual departure from the norm. Its gameplay is solid enough, though meeting robot competitors along the way often proves more frustrating than fun. If this element can be tweaked to provide the pleasure that simply moving around the environments provides then *MoHo* could prove a surprising hit. PlayStation sequel fans, however, will still ignore it regardless.





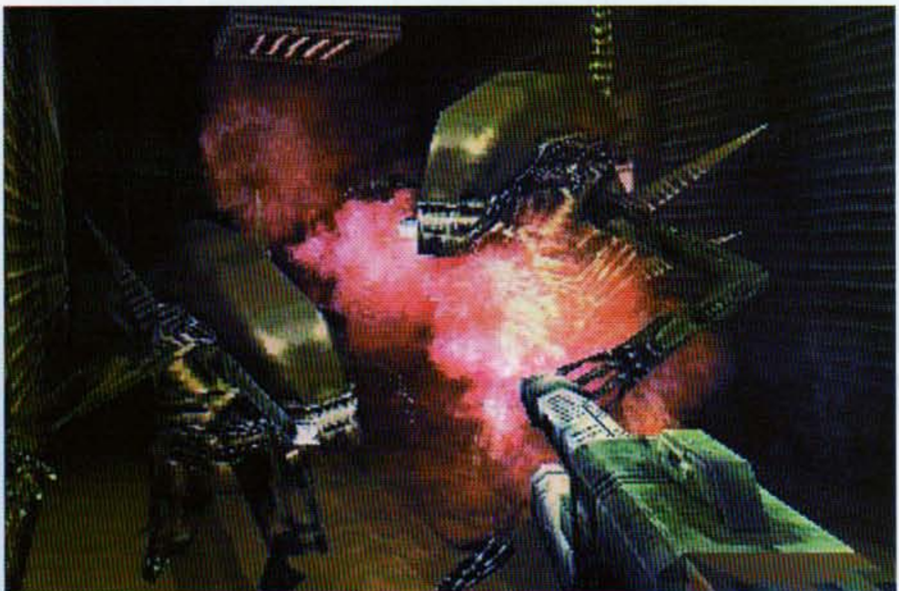
Complete a certain number of the allotted challenges on each prison level and you'll find that new complexes open up

ALIEN RESURRECTION

Film tie-ins are notoriously poor timekeepers, and Argonaut's new firstperson shooter is no exception. Has the three years of development been well spent?







Nine weapons are expected to make an appearance in the final game, but some of these will be specific to particular characters, such as Call's laser



Human enemies will appear, but the aliens are more unnerving

Format: **PlayStation**
Publisher: **Fox Interactive**
Developer: **Argonaut**
Release: **September**
Origin: **UK**

Some three years in the making, Argonaut hopes that *Alien Resurrection* will blend a firstperson experience with an atmosphere more reminiscent of survival horror. Although a thirdperson incarnation of the game was largely complete before ECTS last year, the decision was taken to switch to a firstperson perspective in order to better convey the haunted-house-in-space theme of the films. *Alien Resurrection* will look dated alongside next-generation titles but it promises to extract every last drop of juice from Sony's grey box, with the game featuring high-poly enemies and environments showcasing dynamic lighting effects, plus specific animations for different damage locations.

Although the controls can be confusing at first, there is a range of options to customise them, and the first of ten levels affords players the opportunity to get used to the system. Starting *in medias res*, Ripley must explore her immediate surroundings to find out what is going on. Players will have to adopt the role of three other characters as the game progresses, each with distinct attributes and weaponry available to them. By way of example the android, Call, can take more damage than Ripley. Plot and structure are each heavily based on the celluloid original, with the ultimate goal being to reach smuggler ship, the Betty, and escape from the USS Auriga. Puzzles appear to be standard firstperson fare, with save points dotted around the ship and elements of resource management thrown in.

While this is all standard fare, Argonaut has worked hard at conveying a deeply involving sense of atmosphere throughout the game. From the very start, playing *Alien Resurrection* is a slightly disturbing experience. Sound effects are remarkable, with the dull throb of the ship's engines taking the place of music, and a constant computer chatter that may also provide clues to the canny player. Dual Shock effects are also striking. And though the aliens are slow in comparison to those in *Aliens Versus Predator* – or indeed the films themselves – they attack from all directions and are an insidious and disconcerting threat, getting tougher as the game progresses.

With a fifth instalment in the movie series looking unlikely for the near future, this title will doubtless keep franchise devotees happy, but it should also have the potential to appeal to fans of quality gameplay.



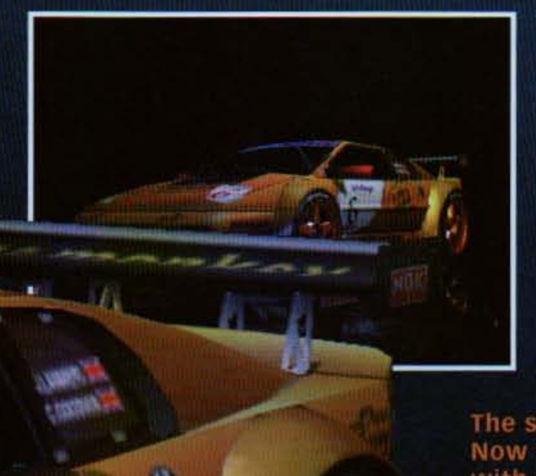




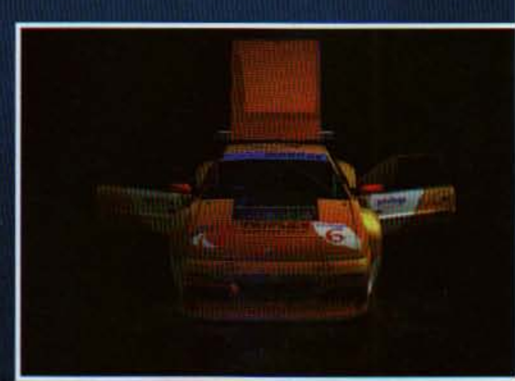
Locations in the game will be familiar to fans of the movie, as will the facehuggers, whose attacks will require the use of an autodoc

WorldSportsCars









The success of *Street Racer* bought them Ferraris. Now they share a Smart microcar. Edge catches up with a passionate two man team intent on producing the most detailed, most realistic racing game to date

It's probably fair to say the world of racing games is suffering from mild schizophrenia, with realistic racers and simulations fighting a continual battle for supremacy (arcade-style handling is dead – see Testscreen Intro, p71). Right now, realism-based racing is the dominant, more outgoing and possibly more stable personality – the one adored by casual players and the videogaming racing enthusiast alike. On the surface the genre seems easy-going, thoroughly likeable and instantly at home on today's consoles.

Developers keen to recreate the closest thing to a racing car with a cathode ray tube for a windscreen have always required the kind of computing power only a PC can deliver

There is, however, a darker side. One of such an obsessive, complex and tortuous nature that it would force all but the most assured console to make its excuses and promptly leave town. Yet, like some Freudian therapist relishing the challenge, the PC is staying firmly put, confident its superior processing power can handle anything and everything the racing sim can drive into its deepest recesses.

The racing simulation's possessive relationship over the PC market goes back generations, of course. Developers keen to recreate the closest thing to a racing car with a cathode ray tube for a windscreen have always required the kind of computing power only a PC can deliver. It's a highly competitive scene where Papyrus' *Grand Prix Legends* enjoys a commanding position over the field, though Geoff Crammond's *Grand Prix 3* is threatening to slipstream into the lead any day soon.

But there is a new team in the paddock. Twins **Chris** and **Tony West** have taken a day off from working on *World Sports Cars* and have arrived at **Edge**'s office to show off their latest venture. Their last published game may have been 1994's *Street Racer* on the SNES, but had Virgin not cancelled their last project three years ago the market would have benefited from another rally game. Passionate for cars and all things motorsport-related from their earliest memories, little has changed in adulthood. A couple of Lotuses were sitting in their driveways after developing a James Bond title for Domark in the '80s, while the proceeds from *Street Racer* purchased a pair of Ferrari 348s. These were subsequently sold to finance the ongoing *WSC* project, and while they currently trundle along in a yellow Smart (the Swatch Group and Daimler-Benz joint micro automotive venture), plans for a tune-up are naturally afoot.

Photography: Pete Loretz (Studio II)





West Racing: a two-man team working from home, with Chris (left in above pic) coding, and Tony handling visuals. They have worked this way since 1984

WSC is a high-end simulation of sportscar racing. Details of which cars and circuits are to be included remain unconfirmed at this stage, but expect a comprehensive range

WSC is a high-end simulation of sportscar racing. Details of which cars and international circuits are to be included remain unconfirmed at this stage – publisher Empire is looking into licences – but expect a comprehensive range when the title ships.

But right now the brothers have other things to worry about. Unquestionably the foundation of a racing simulation is its dynamics model. *WSC*'s has been five years in the making, starting life as a simple kinematic demo and evolving into one of the most accurate, elaborate examples around.

"It seems every racing game that comes out claims to have real physics," says Chris, "but as yet, only *Grand Prix Legends* has anything that could really be called real. We feel that the level of detail that *GPL* showed in its handling should be the norm as opposed to the exception in racing simulations, and this is what we are aiming for.

"All aspects of the car model are dealt with in a physically correct way. The suspension geometry is modelled so changes in camber, etc, are all real. Force-feedback effects use real values and the tyre model uses the latest developments from the Society of Automotive Engineers. The nice thing about doing everything in a physically correct way is if you change something on the car, not only will you feel a change in the way it drives, but you will see the effect on the car, so if you adjust the camber or suspension link lengths you will see it change on screen."

And before you ask, the model also includes the implementation of aerodynamic values to create downforce. Of course, everything is fully adjustable. Spring rates, bumpstops, arm length and positioning, rollbar, damping, ride height and all other aspects of vehicle suspension can be tinkered with. Similarly, engine and transmission related features such as torque values and gear ratios are also modifiable.

"Everything has a proper value,







The level of detail on the cars is mightily impressive – close in and notice that the wheels are properly modelled, along with an intricate brake assembly, of course. Expect to take control of all the parameters during pit stops (above right)

Format: **PC**

Publisher: **Empire**

Developer: **West Racing**

Release: **2001**

Origin: **UK**





You can start the car by going through the electrics/starter motor routine. A clutch is included and audio will match visual quality

everything has been modelled correctly," promises Chris. "The gearbox, the clutch – everything has a wear factor and can be damaged or broken, so if you're doing a very long race you have to keep an eye on that – that bit might fail and will then affect the pit stops later on."

The pits. A part of racing so often overlooked in games, but which the West brothers are about to bring into the limelight with considerable force.

"One of the big features of the games is going to be pit stops," reveals Tony. "I don't know if you remember the *Pit Stop II* game a long time ago? It's still one of the only games that allows you control over the pit stops, which is something we want to bring up to date – really give the player control.

"If you come into a pit stop it'll be up to you to pick up an air wrench and plug it in, to get the car up on its jack, to take the wheels off, to put a new wheel on and you'll be able to perform all manner of tasks [such as] changing fluid levels, refuelling, changing the driver, replacing disc pads, tune your engine, even down to a bucket and sponge that you can pick up and clean the windscreen with."

With new Formula One games appearing on an almost monthly basis it's bewildering – and somewhat disheartening – that no other developer has seen fit to incorporate some of these elements in any of them.

"The advantage we have over Formula One games is that they have eight-second pit stops and you can't have interactivity in there," retorts Chris, "whereas during sportscar races they can be in there for half an hour – even the shorter ones take a two to five minutes, so you can really get involved."

If nothing else these pit stops serve as a mini-game, which reflects the Wests' past spent delving into genres other than just serious simulations. However, there are, naturally, gameplay implications.

"It's going to be up to you to know what's wrong with your car, what needs fixing and what needs just checking and stuff," concludes Tony. "So it's kind of a game within a game and I think it'll be one of the strong features of the title. It's probably going to separate it from other racing games."

But there are many other features that distinguish *WSC* from the competition. The level of damage detail is just one, yet is a fundamental aspect of any self-respecting simulation. Naturally, *WSC* promises something as accomplished as its other attributes.

"All the cars are modelled inside and out and are panel based, so if something on the real car opens or detaches then it does on our models," says Chris. "The player can remove all the body panels if he wishes and drive the car with no bodywork. This allows for some nice damage effects as well as making the cars feel more real and not simply like an indestructible box on wheels. So if you're flying down the straight and your body panel comes loose it can fly off."

And while they await news on the licensing issues that affect the content of the final version, the twins are already one step ahead of the game.

"We have designed *WSC* to be the basis for a whole series of expansion and add-on packs," reveals Chris. "Obviously you'll get car packs and track packs, but these can be any cars from Formula One to go-karts and the tracks could be anything from Le Mans to Daytona. We plan to do some of these ourselves and rely on the fans to provide the rest by releasing the format and editors on the Internet. The possibilities are enormous."

Indeed. And this is where **Edge** leaves West Racing. Or rather, the other way around as the two brothers squeeze into their microcar and head home to Woking. Still, while they buzz along the M4 they can comfort themselves with the knowledge that when *WSC* ships they'll be able to buy a whole fleet of the blighters. **E**



The engine is made up of its own separate components so that when you fire it up the exhaust vibrates, the torque twists, etc

Shadow of Destiny

There is no blood, no combat, and the hero dies at the beginning of the game. Confused? You will be. **Edge** meets the team aiming to turn 3D adventures inside out. Backwards



Shadow of Destiny **will stand out as a welcome change from the violent, blood-spattered titles that have besieged the PlayStation over the past few years. More puzzle-based than fight-fest, the time travel aspect will test the grey matter of gamers more accustomed to using violence as a solution**

Ever since *Biohazard* lurched on to the PlayStation four years ago, the 3D adventure has been dominated by blood. *Silent Hill*, *Dino Crisis*, *D2* – all were constructed around hideous beasts, vulnerable humans and massive firearms, usually combining the three to stage scenes of viscera-heavy battles. Perhaps it took a new console – a console designed specifically to be placed beneath the family TV – to shake game designers out of their obsession with shock and violence, and to drive them to try something totally new. Which is why *Shadow of Destiny* will be aiming straight for PlayStation2 this winter.

But hold on for a second. A family adventure? That sounds like a nightmare. How could such a monstrosity work? Well, according to **Junko Kawano**, the director of the game (and the only female game director at Konami), it works just like any other big adventure of the last four years, with just one ingredient missing. "As in *Biohazard* or *Silent Hill*, you control the lead character in a 3D environment which you can explore freely," she explains. "You use the analogue pad to look in any direction you want, and all the actions are performed through pressure on just one button. Now, the most original point is there are no battles. Most of the game is based around puzzling situations which the player has to solve. And to do this the hero must time travel."

Yes, time travel – that's the other interesting innovation. *Shadow of Destiny* is perhaps the first game in history that begins with Game Over, its hero stabbed in the back before you even press a button. The only way forwards is, well, backwards. And that's the idea. "So a man named Eike is killed. Someone stabs him from behind, and he doesn't know why," begins Kawano, who came up with the initial concept two years ago while working on a PlayStation game entitled *TwinBee RPG*. "Eike's soul arrives in a strange place where a mysterious man, a kind of fortune teller, tells him that it will be possible for him to go back through time and prevent his death from happening. Eike is then transported back to Earth

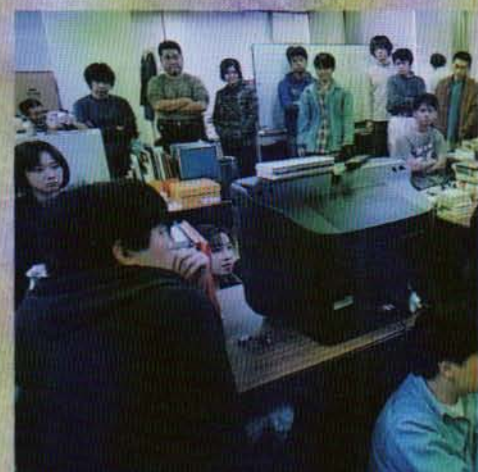
Time travel – that's the other interesting innovation. *Shadow of Destiny* is perhaps the first game in history that begins with Game Over, its hero stabbed in the back

30 minutes before his murder." So it's a case of game on, again.

But this is only the beginning. Each time Eike manages to evade a death sentence another looms up to take its place and eventually the player must travel to four different time periods – 1500, 1900, 1980 and 2000 – to unravel the mystery of Eike's identity and prevent his

Photography: Hiroki Izumi





Gozo Kitao is general manager at Konami Computer Entertainment Tokyo. Junko Kawano is the only female game director at the company

untimely demise once and for all. In some respects, then, it's a puzzle game – a sort of reverse whodunnit: at each stage the player simply has to figure out how to prevent Eike's death. Unlike *Biohazard* et al, it's not really about spending hours exploring and admiring the environments. **Gozo Kitao**, the game's producer and the general manager of KCET (who previously worked on *Silent Hill*), chips in: "It's important to note that the player doesn't have much time when he's walking around each town. He has to prevent the death of his character from happening, so he will have to focus on this issue. Believe me, he will have to use the time wisely!"



Kawano's workstation, overflowing with cute, isn't atypical in Japanese devcos. When Edge visits, the entire team turns out for a demo of the game (top right)

This appears to be a very cerebral project – something gamers aren't really used to with console titles. But then, it appears the team's gameplay influences may come from the PC

Instead of creating a series of sprawling environments, then, the *Shadow of Destiny* team has set the whole game in one condensed town packed with features and filled with rooms for the player to investigate. According to Kawano, this fictitious location was inspired by German towns and the team spent months researching European history to get the details correct. From what **Edge** has seen the attention to detail is indeed impressive with period architecture and fashions recreated perfectly for each era.

They haven't approached the whole time travel issue lightly, either. "The problem with time travel is that it creates paradoxes," Kawano points out. "For example, introducing technologies too advanced for a specific period would provoke very strong reactions. Using a lighter in 1500 would terrify people – they would think the fire was coming from your hand! You see? And, of course, if you change something in the past it will have direct consequences on the future.

"Conversations are also affected. Going back to the same period several times, you may meet the same character over and over again, but he will always greet you as though he's meeting you for the first time. However, your character would remember him and so what Eike says will change accordingly. So, you see, it's hard for us to get the all paradoxes working correctly." Kitao-san agrees: "Yes, it is hard, very hard." But no one ever said trying something new would be easy.

It comes as little surprise, then, to learn that the team has been watching films based around time travel – specifically the 'Back to the Future' series ("It's been interesting to understand how this theme has been approached previously," says Kawano). Books on the subject have also been studied. This appears to be a very cerebral project – something gamers aren't really used to with console titles. But then it appears the team's gameplay influences may come from the PC rather than PlayStation or N64: "I am totally immersed in *Ultima Online*," admits Kawano. "I love this game and spend many hours on it every night! Yes, I really ought to get some sleep."

"For me it is *Age of Empires 2*," says Kitao-san. No wonder they've broken all those *Resident Evil* rules so decisively.

As for the graphics engine, apparently *Shadow* will be regularly throwing 70-80,0000 polys about the screen, 30,000 for the backgrounds and 6-7,000 for the characters – of which there will often be eight on screen at once. The team is also working on special effects, trying to exploit

Format: **PlayStation2**
Publisher: **Konami**
Developer: **In-house (KCET)**
Release: **Q4 (Japan)**
Origin: **Japan**











Using a simple cigarette lighter has interesting consequences in a time period where such technology does not yet exist (above). A fortune teller (left) supplies invaluable assistance as you progress through the game. The overall graphical style is oddly reminiscent of *Silent Hill*

some of the unique abilities of the PlayStation 2 untapped by the disappointing launch titles. "At the moment, very few are included. We're focusing on the scenery and the event movies, trying out several shoots to get the best angle," says Kitao-san. "However, we will eventually add light filtered through windows, flame for fires, realtime shadows, etc. In the winter environment the character will walk out into the snow and leave footprints, the cold will make his breath visible as condensation, and so on."

Again, though, any thought of a *Shenmue*-style world where everything happens in realtime and the seasons are tied to an internal clock should be cast aside. *Shadow of Destiny* seems to be a series of controlled set-pieces, each with the same specific task: save Eike from his preordained death. "The moment of day or night and the weather are fixed according to the time in the game," confirms Kitao-san. "Plus, as the game requires the player to act quickly in solving each situation, he will not have time to notice changes in the light or weather. You cannot wait for night to come or for the rain to stop, Eike will have to act immediately to prevent his death from occurring."

This may sound like too much pressure, but Konami seems to have created a kind of in-built continues feature which sits easily within the game's unique structure. "There will be numerous ways for Eike to die, so the player has to work out how to prevent this from happening," recaps Kawano. "Each time he dies, though, he will return to the strange place featured at the beginning of the game where the fortune teller will give him one more chance, and a vital clue. Then the player will start again just before the





The game opens with the hero dying, having been stabbed in the back. It's then up to the player to travel back in time to try and prevent death from occurring







Kawano and her team are experimenting with a number of camera angles in an attempt to make the game tremendously cinematic in mood and feel





The game is set in a city with a German feel. The appearance changes in accordance with time periods, and exhaustive research lends the game authenticity

moment of death and must react according to the hint provided." Indeed, just after the stabbing that begins the game, the fortune teller advises Eike to stuff something metallic up the back of his shirt to deflect the blow when he returns to Earth. The first quest, then, perhaps centres on looking for a stainless-steel tea tray....

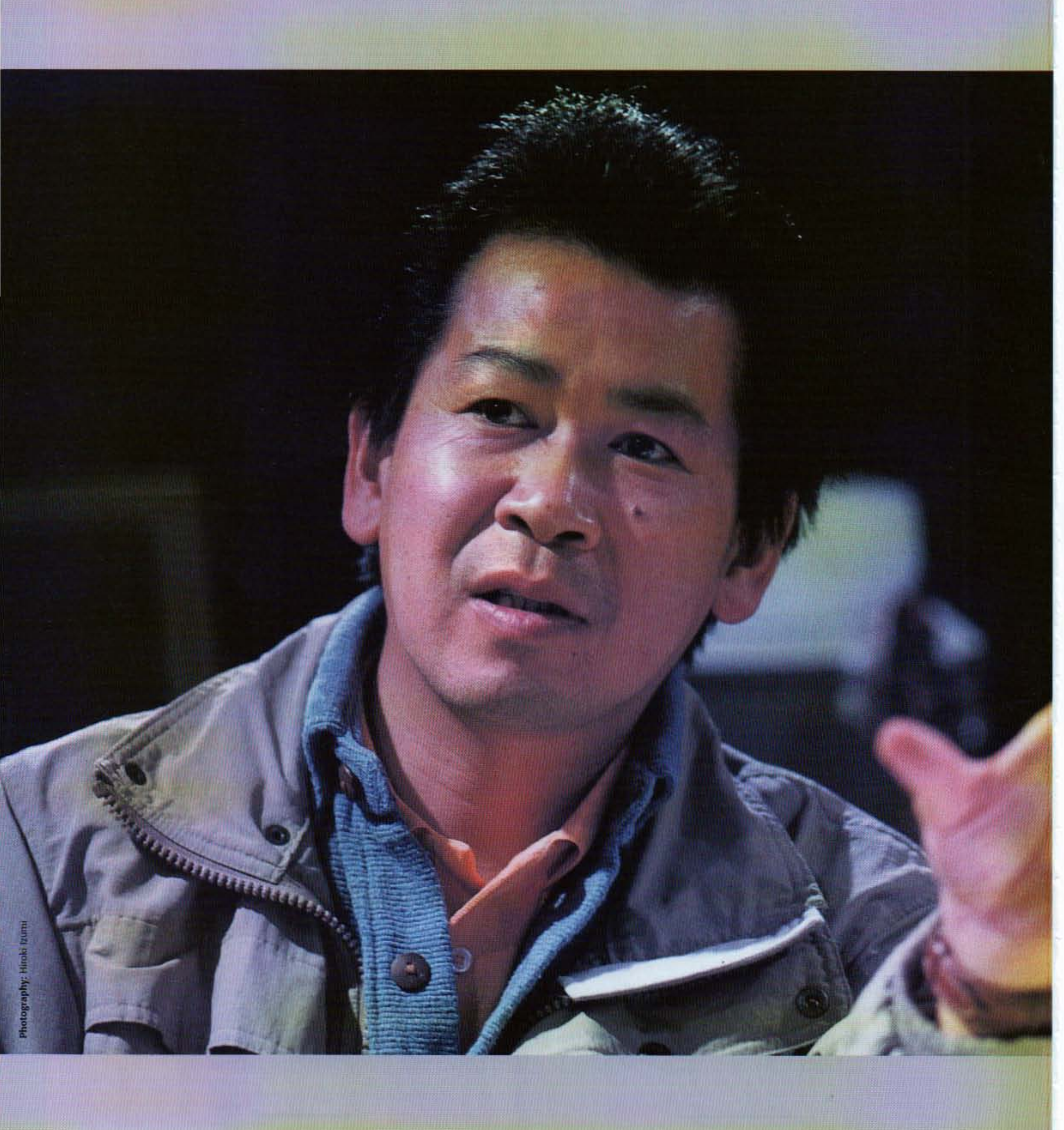
So no violence, and a second chance every time you die? Sounds like a breeze. But of course it isn't. This is a puzzle-based adventure with the emphasis placed on thinking rather than simply surviving. Also, as in, say, *Resident Evil 2*, the gaming structure is rather open – there are multiple endings (one big one, apparently, and several lesser achievements), so there's significant replay appeal. And even without that, Kitao-san and Kawano promise a playing time of "several dozen hours."

With the dawn of the PS2 era, it may be necessary for gamers to reprogram their approach to interactive entertainment. The inclusion of a DVD player with the machine is bound to attract millions of people who have never considered buying a console before – developers must learn how to reach this new audience. Kitao-san certainly agrees: "The PS2 launch was a success because of the DVD video compatibility. Now the machine is in many homes where people were not especially attracted to videogames. Now they can be tempted to play them. I'm very conscious they would not buy standard gamer titles – it is important then to develop titles for this new, but very wide target audience. *Shadow of Destiny* could be seen as a light user title since it has no violence and no hard or complicated action sequences."

Could this a sign of things to come? With PS2 aiming at a genuinely new audience, an audience that perhaps bought the machine as a DVD player first and a games machine second, will more games follow the rules of films rather than those of videogames? Games that offer dense plotting, very specific set-pieces, decent characterisation and interesting, involving storylines? After the hideous experiments of the early '90s, could the interactive movie finally be about to come of age? The developers of *Shadow of Destiny* certainly think so. On this evidence they may be right.



KCET is currently working on implementing special effects, including light filtering through windows, realistic-looking flames, and realtime shadows



Photography: Hiroki Izumi

The Naomi connection

F355, Out Trigger and 18 Wheeler head home

Sega fans may have been shouting long and hard for Dreamcast software with more depth, but for those who've taken coin-op ports to their hearts, three new titles will be like manna from heaven



This is a critical time for Sega. Just a cursory glance at the PS2 sales figures since its launch on March 4 tells its own story. It has overtaken the total sales of Dreamcast in Japan already, with an average of 45,455 units shifting per day (compared to the Dreamcast with a mere 8,145). If it were a boxing match the referee would be tempted to stop it.

Sega executives might well blanch at such statistics. Yet with **Yu Suzuki** heading the race to develop triple-A DC titles all is not despondency and despair. With the first wave of PS2 launch titles proving underwhelming it is a vital time for Sega's most prolific producer to strike Sony where it really hurts. **Edge** visited Sega's R&D AM#2 to take a look under the bonnet of three new Dreamcast titles in the making.

With only *Ridge Racer V* and *Driving Emotion Type S* to compete with, Sega's impressive *F355 Challenge* might well attract a legion of fans more commonly associated with the tiffosi. The conversion of the game from its sophisticated three-screen arcade cabinet to the Dreamcast was clearly not in the same league as previous Naomi-to-Dreamcast ports. "The arcade version was running on a set of four Naomi boards," says Suzuki-san. "If you consider that one Naomi board is already superior to a Dreamcast then you will realise it was not what you might call a standard conversion." Putting technical limitations aside Suzuki-san remains confident that little has been lost by way of either feel or thrills. "Every aspect and feature of the arcade version has been converted to my satisfaction," he enthuses. "The graphics are almost the same and though there are some small differences they are not obvious."

> "If you consider that **one Naomi board** is already **superior to a Dreamcast** then you will realise it was not what you might call **a standard conversion**"

Every effort has gone into reproducing the simulation elements of the game which made the coin-op version so distinctive. Completely foregoing the traditional arcade roots of driving games – containing







Ferrari F355 Challenge

Format: Dreamcast Publisher: Sega Developer: R&D AM#2 Release: 2000 Origin: Japan



The biggest challenge facing the DC version of *F355* is the loss of dedicated controls, though Suzuki-san is confident with the result



"At first I thought it would be limiting but since the game is a true car simulator featuring the Ferrari 355 I think people who are real automobile fans will appreciate it"

powersliding and supercharged vehicles – the *F355* model needs careful handling if corners are to be taken smoothly. Suzuki-san promises that the Ferrari handling and dynamics have all been faithfully recaptured for the Dreamcast version: "As in the arcade, the car is not one unified element but takes into account several aspects, each of which will have a direct impact on the car behaviour. It is the exact conversion of the arcade." Rather than just a physics engine taking its cue from a single block polygon, the code will take into account the feedback from many areas including the tyres, suspension and chassis; accelerate too quickly after a sharp turn and the car will begin to slip out of control. The effect is truly intense, leaving the player in no doubt that the fault was with driver error and not with the whims of loose physics.

In keeping with Sega's push to promote online gaming, Dreamcast *F355* will offer certain online challenges. Though Suzuki-san remains coy, it is likely that a Time Attack mode will be available which will register the top eight fastest drivers. A twoplayer split-screen option is also available, although some detail will be lost to maintain high frame rates. "There is also the possibility for the two players to play via the link cable," continues Suzuki-san. "We have kept the same number of circuits – six – and there will also be a training mode as in the arcade version."

A more common trend for racing titles is to try and go for the most cars – either to choose from or to race against on the same circuit. When asked if the F355 licence proved a limiting factor in this current climate the Sega producer defends his decision to limit the game to just one model. "At first I thought it would be limiting but since the game is a true car simulator featuring the Ferrari 355 I think people who are real automobile fans will appreciate it. Since there is only one car model it allowed us to really concentrate on the driving physics."

Cleverly, the arcade game incorporates what Suzuki calls his own OS. "You could insert data from other car models and experience for a few

Visually, there is little to differentiate this from its arcade parent. Edge hopes the gameplay remains as close

minutes another car in the place of the Ferrari 355. The realism level will stay high and the car physics respected. So, I could easily make a realistic GT driving game very quickly." A VMS option to enter different car physics would certainly be an intriguing prospect, yet Suzuki-san will not confirm any such feature.

A realistic driving game is essential for today's speed-hungry market – witness how Nintendo suffered from not having one. Dreamcast *F355 Challenge* is an exciting prospect and should win Sega many friends. As for a release date? "I'm only on the development side," says Suzuki-san. "I must say, I don't know anything about the marketing issues. I guess an announcement would be made during E3. Let's say in 2000."







The first true realistic racer for Dreamcast should ensure players make full use of the tutorial option



Hiroshi Kataoka

Yu Suzuki's producer partner shares his feelings with Edge about the nuances of the firstperson shooter, a troubled coin-op market, and jumbo steering wheels...

Out Trigger

Format: Dreamcast | Publisher: Sega | Developer: R&D AM#2 | Release: 2000 | Origin: Japan





Coin-op *Out Trigger* worked best when two or more cabinets were linked, so effective multiplayer modes were an absolute necessity for the DC version. Early evidence bodes well for social players

Doom and its FPS clones have strangely been overlooked in the east, not least because Japanese gamers frequently claim that motion sickness befalls them when they attempt to sample the most extreme examples. *Out Trigger*, a firstperson shooter in coin-op form with dazzling graphics, was therefore something of a surprise when it appeared on the Japanese arcade scene last year. Producer **Hiroshi Kataoka** tells **Edge** how Sega is bringing the experience to home users.

Edge: What was the inspiration behind *Out Trigger*?

Hiroshi Kataoka: The inspiration comes straight from *Quake* and *Doom*. This kind of game is very popular in the west but not in Japan for several reasons. Firstly because the controls for *Doom* and *Quake* are on PC using a mouse. Console controllers cannot compete. The second point is because of high network costs. It is simply too expensive in Japan. In the US it is almost free. I really wanted to make a *Doom*-style title and show the Japanese players another kind of experience. To do this I had to make use of the arcade where a play costs only ¥100 [common for one credit]. It is not attempting to be a competitor to *Quake* – *Out Trigger* is really aiming to show Japanese gamers that there are other fun gameplay styles.

Edge: How did the arcade version perform in Japan and the US?

HK: *18 Wheeler* has been a great success in both Japan and the US. *Out Trigger*, however, performed well in Japan but quite bad in the US. This is down to the cost rather than the game, though. Linking four cabinets together appears to be too expensive for the US market. The feedback about the game itself has been good so I hope the Dreamcast version will be successful.

Edge: Presumably the Naomi to DC conversion went smoothly...

HK: The software part was very easy. It is now very well known that converting a Naomi program to Dreamcast is not time consuming. We simply had to think about what will be added to make the game fun on a console. But now we are going to work on the network part of this conversion and since my team and I have not much experience in this particular field it will be the most difficult part of the development. Yeah, long nights of hard work to come!

Edge: Are there any visual differences between the two versions?

HK: Well, ask a player if he see any differences and he will reply, 'No'. Both versions are exactly the same. The frame rate is also identical. Now, some textures may be less detailed on Dreamcast but it would be hard to notice the difference. I wanted to keep the same quality in graphics and animation that worked in the arcade. I'm quite proud of the result.

Edge: Will the fourplayer mode make it to the Dreamcast version?

HK: Of course, the Dreamcast version had to include multiplayer options. So, in







With less RAM than the Naomi board, the Dreamcast version offers less detailed textures, but Kataoka-san believes you have to look closely to notice a difference





Kataoka-san claims that the DC version will allow players to design their own characters and maps, although it's not yet known whether or not users will be able to share such data online

addition to the standard solo arcade version there will be 2P and even 4P modes. In the 2P mode the screen is divided into horizontal strips. In the 4P mode the screen will split into four areas. We managed to keep the frame rate as high as the solo mode. Of course, to enjoy the 4P mode I recommend you have a large screen! On the graphics issue, we had to make hard choices to keep the speed. There will be only one perspective available in multiplayer – in the arcade there are actually two views: both third- and firstperson; Dreamcast will be firstperson only. Also, there will be fewer polygons but again I promise that the quality level is great and that the player will notice no difference.

Edge: Are you implementing any extra DC-specific modes?

HK: Yes, there will be many. First, as you know, there will be these split-screen modes. In addition to this there will be an edit option. The player will be able to design their own characters, maps and stages. There are no plans for a story mode at the moment. However, there is the online mode which should include deathmatch and team cooperative – the red team against the blue, for example. I don't think there will be any capture-the-flag mode since it would make it too similar to *Quake*. A chat system is under development to allow players to communicate together.

Edge: What do you think makes *Out Trigger* different to *Quake*?

HK: They look the same but there are real differences. The first important one is that *Out Trigger* is an arcade game. So in two or three minutes you have to achieve a high score and defeat your adversary. It is very speedy gameplay in a short time. All of the design has been focused on this arcade gameplay. That determines the shape and length of the stage and the speed of the character. Yes, the players have to enjoy an intense experience in only two or three minutes. Plus, in *Out Trigger* you can get medals to boost your score that are crucial to the gameplay. In *Quake* you can play without your attention on the clock.

Edge: Any plans for a PC version?

HK: People in my team would like to make a PC version. This would tap into the US PC online market and it would be very interesting to develop a version using the full capabilities of Sega.com. I would love to see my game going the same way as *Quake III*, allowing Dreamcast and PC users to battle it out. Wow! That would be cool. But, once again, there is no PC version planed at this moment.

Edge: The coin-op used a trackball for control. How have you implemented this on the Dreamcast?

HK: You will be able to play with the Dreamcast controller, although I confess it is not the best way to enjoy the game. We will introduce a mouse like Microsoft's standard PC model. The quality is much higher than the Saturn's one! I still do not know if we will release a boxed set including the game and the mouse. The mouse offers intuitive control similar to the PC. I'm not sure if a thirdparty mouse will be compatible with *Out Trigger*.

Edge: Will *Out Trigger* be VMS compatible?

HK: I'm speaking with members of my team about that. I would like to use it as a second screen where confidential information would appear only to the player. I have a few other ideas but nothing has been decided yet.

"It would be hard to notice the difference. I wanted to keep the same quality in graphics and animation that worked in the arcade. I'm quite proud of the result"

Edge: When will the game be released?

HK: Since the network development is only just starting I really cannot give any specific date. I'm aiming at a simultaneous release in the US and Japan. I must confess that I have a particular interest in the US market since I find the development going on around Sega.com very interesting.







18 Wheeler

Format: Dreamcast | Publisher: Sega | Developer: R&D AM#2 | Release: 2000 | Origin: Japan

Though Sega is renowned for its game-related peripherals, **Edge** doesn't seriously expect *18 Wheeler*'s most distinctive original attribute to be available for the Dreamcast. This dynamic HGV sim was inspired and created around a piece of fundamental driving kit that was brought into the R&D AM#2 offices by one of Sega's cabinet engineers.

Edge spoke to Kataoka-san about the potentially difficult conversion of this unusual and often manic driving game.

Edge: Where did the concept come from? Is it just a logical extension of Sega's recent titles based on professions such as *Brave Fire Fighters* and *Crazy Taxi*?

"There is a major change in the arcade market and I think that cabinets will have a greater importance. The recent experience with *18 Wheeler* is proof of this"

Hiroshi Kataoka: Well, the idea did not come from me or anyone at AM2. In fact the idea came from a man called Goji who belongs to the cabinet design R&D inside Sega. He bought in a real truck steering wheel and said it would be great to make a game using this kind of big truck mechanism. We were excited about the idea and it became a complete project for AM2. As regards the Professional Series issue it was a surprise to me. I mean, I did not know the game was to be part of this scheme until I noticed a seal on the cabinet which said that *18 Wheeler* was a part of the Professional Series. I hadn't been informed!

Edge: Do you feel you've managed to incorporate the feel of the game on Dreamcast without the wheel?

HK: The arcade cabinet is very special so we had to find other ways to enjoy the console version. The online option will be one of them, in addition to many settings we incorporated to make the game fun and accessible. The online feature will be available for the Japanese release, though we may not have time to complete this for the US or European release. A multiplayer option allowing two players to compete is currently in development. The frame rate is the same although fewer cars will be competing.

Edge: What was your goal when developing the DC version, and have you achieved it?

HK: The graphics, animations and speed are exactly the same as the arcade. I'm very satisfied. The game was a great success in the arcade, especially in the US. We presented the cheaper, standard cabinet version in Las Vegas during the arcade show. It includes a big wheel, too, and we had a very good feedback from operators. Even in Japan, where I thought we would make average sales, the game performed very well. So users like this title. I thought it was a good game to port to Dreamcast so more players could enjoy it.

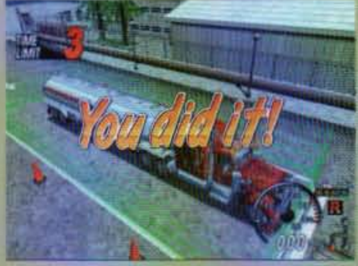
Edge: The game was criticised for being too easy – is the DC version harder? Does it offer more tracks and trucks?

HK: Well, the game features a truck crossing the US from the east to the west.



Driving a sluggish juggernaut may not sound like ideal videogame material, but the coin-op version of *18 Wheeler* proved both compelling and rewarding







Dreamcast *18 Wheeler* will offer online modes and VMS compatibility, allowing you to store data for your own, personalised truck









The Parking Challenge mode (above centre) has been updated for the DC version, with difficulty levels ramped up and a slew of new, more varied tests thrown in



However, because it is an arcade game you arrive at the west coast in a very short time! For the Dreamcast version I wanted the player to enjoy the landscape and the driving so we made the game less speedy. The tracks will be much longer. Plus there is the Parking Challenge. I really loved this feature in the arcade version but it was too easy. On Dreamcast this Parking Challenge will have a greater emphasis. There will be plenty of challenges for the player. Most people will spend most of their time on this particular mode! Other trucks or tracks? I don't know at this moment. There is a bonus truck in the Japanese version, a Dèkotora [Decoration Truck], as in the arcade. In the overseas versions, it's available from the beginning.

Edge: The areas in the game seemed to offer several different ways for you to explore but because of the time limit there was never any time to see them all. Do you plan to include some kind of campaign mode that would allow players to go around the environment freely without having to worry about racing other trucks?

HK: There will be a story mode, although *18 Wheeler* will remain a racing game.

Edge: Are there any DC-specific features?

HK: In addition to the online feature the VMS will be used to store data about your own truck. An edit mode should be included to let the player make a customised or personalised model.

Edge: After *18 Wheeler*, Namco released its own truck game. Is this a new trend?

HK: I think both games are very different. I mean, Namco's title is more comical. I think their title is more suited to the Professional Series, not our *18 Wheeler*!

Edge: What do you think about the flagging arcade market?

HK: The situation is not good in Japan and is getting worse in the US as well. There is a major change in the arcade market and I think that cabinets will have a greater importance. The recent experience with *18 Wheeler* is proof of this. When you offer a very original or funny experience, players will be interested. I think I will explore this aspect more in the future. We need to offer the kind of things you cannot experience with a home videogame system.

Project

Format: **PlayStation2/PC**

Publisher: **Eidos**

Developer: **Core Design**

Release: **Spring 2001**

Origin: **UK**

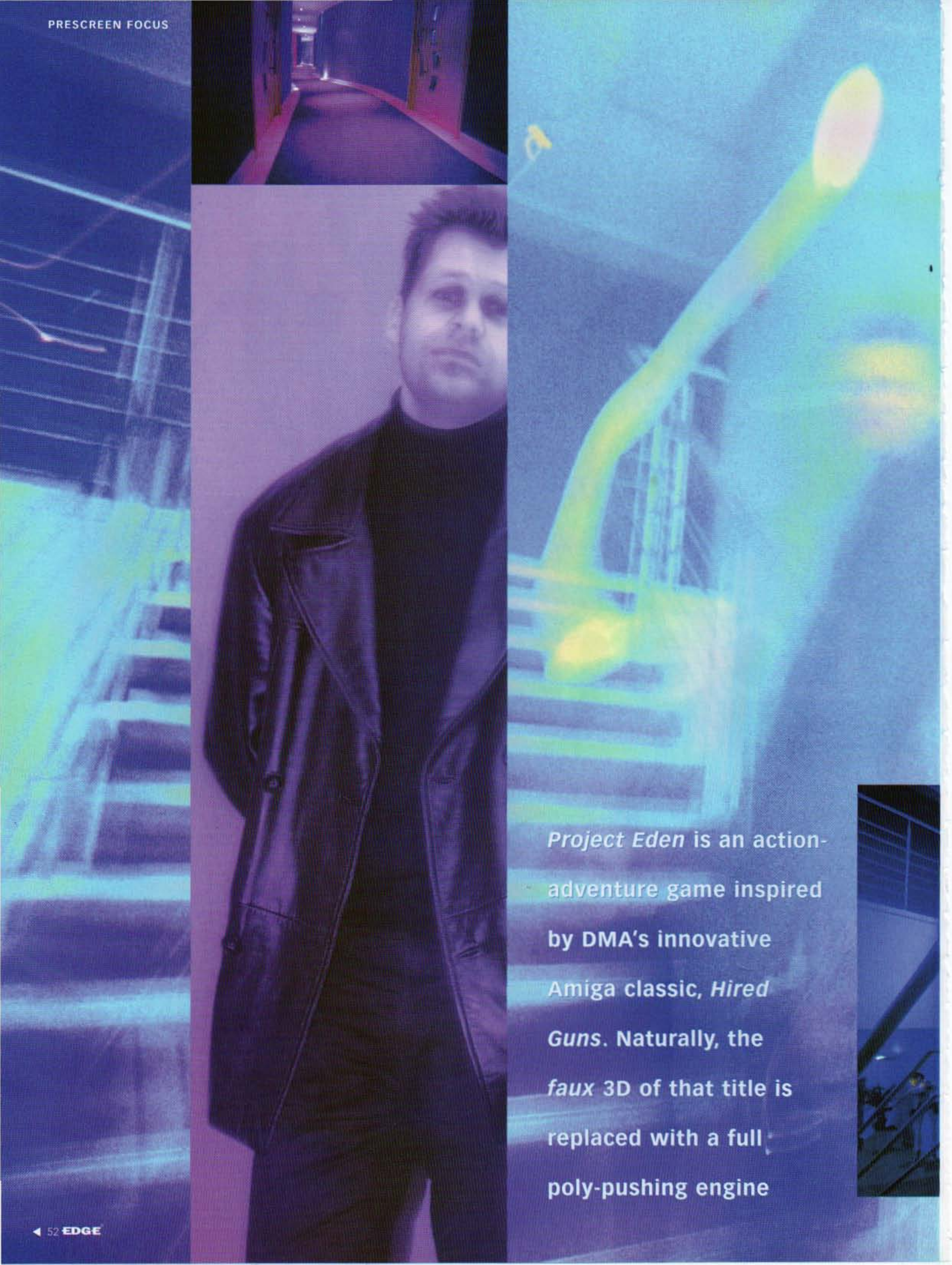


Photography: Martin Thompson

Eden

Forget Lara... for now, at least. *Project Eden* is Core Design's Next Big Thing. Edge examines this forthcoming opus in detail, and also finds the time to sneak a look at *Herdy Gerdy*, Core's ambitious PlayStation2 adventure

Before this trip, the past two visits by **Edge** to Core Design's Derby HQ coincided with harsh deadlines, with certain staff virtually living in the office. Dedication and high team morale are at the heart of the development ethos. During its last-but-one trip to Derby, to view *The Last Revelation*, **Edge** caught a glimpse of why: Core, contrary to the more vociferous claims of the videogames press, has never embraced the *Tomb Raider*-only label certain quarters are keen to apply. *Project Eden*, its latest next-gen title, has been in development since the first *Tomb Raider* was finished. Rather than the bleary-eyed, caffeine-fuelled workforce anticipated (and, mindful of history, expected), **Edge** recently met the team responsible for *Project Eden* in high spirits and relaxed mood. But then their deadline is still some six months away...



Project Eden **is an action-adventure game inspired by DMA's innovative Amiga classic, *Hired Guns*. Naturally, the *faux* 3D of that title is replaced with a full poly-pushing engine**



The *Project Eden* team promise suspense at all times, which will be generated through the use of morphing enemies. Menacing gang members can turn even nastier at various points

It is fitting that *Project Eden* is being revealed for the first time just after Core's move to new curvy-walled, purple-carpeted and steel-framed premises. Even the choice of the word 'Eden' is surprisingly appropriate, not least in the respect of starting afresh after Lara in an idyllic creative wonderland. Criticism that *Tomb Raider* products have become formulaic has been taken on the chin by operations director **Adrian Smith**. "Watch out for the next-generation *Tomb Raider*," he reveals. "It will offer something different." Poetically, though, it is the *Tomb Raider* franchise that has allowed a title of *Project Eden*'s ambition and scope to be created. Where Adam gave a rib in order for Eve to exist, Lara has lent *Project Eden* her wallet.

Set in the future where sky-rise monstrosities dominate the landscape and the rich occupy the highest levels, the atmosphere of *Project Eden* is the antithesis of its biblical counterpart. Core is still being cagey about the narrative and overall goal of its project. However, with the evils of genetic manipulation playing a major role, it would not take a great leap of the imagination to foresee some kind of sinister organisation trying to fashion a future equivalent of Eden at the heart of the plot. "We decided that there were only about ten different kinds of enemy a player can encounter," confides **Gavin Rummery**, the project's coordinator. "We went for the genetic mutation option." Of course, as a bonus, this neatly sidesteps the traditional videogame issue whereby henchmen are relentlessly, unrealistically similar. In this title, it's a *feature*.

Fundamentally, *Project Eden* is an action-adventure game inspired by one of Rummery's favourite titles – DMA's innovative Amiga classic, *Hired Guns*. Naturally, though, the *faux* 3D of that title is replaced with a full poly-pushing engine – and what appears to be a refreshingly versatile camera system. There are third- and firstperson perspectives to choose from, depending on the player's preference, and these can be switched to suit the situation at hand. Neatly, an over-the-shoulder targeting system has been incorporated – so that even when your character is fleeing a particularly nasty foe, he, she or it can still aim and fire a weapon.

The four heroes at your disposal are part of an urban police force sent out to rid *Project Eden*'s dystopian environs of scum and villainy. From these clichéd beginnings the Core team promise that the plot expands, evolves, and compels. As your force progresses through levels, short cut-scenes are provided in a similar fashion to *Half-Life* – and much time has been spent on both the narrative and facial kinematics to draw players in. Along with near-realistic muscle movements in the faces, eyes which move and follow enemies around the room have been incorporated to recreate an eerie likeness of the human demeanour. When someone talks, their lips are synchronised directly with the sound, promises animator **Stuart Atkinson**. This will be more than mere window dressing, however – Core expects players to enjoy to the accompanying dialogue. "We can assure you we have a very strange tale to tell," says Atkinson, enigmatically.

Looking around the room where *Project Eden* is coming to fruition, **Edge** notices for the first time the clinical and uncluttered surroundings. Perhaps it's because this team has only been here for a few weeks, although **Edge** almost suspects that desks cluttered with the empty Coke cans and pizza boxes commonly associated with development teams is frowned upon by management. Everything is ordered and has its place. Only **Neil Boyd** (level design and mapping) has a desk with something unusual laying atop it – four-colour photographs of Porsche sports cars. "It's my incentive for completing the game," he smiles.

Though Rummery is very aware that increasingly lengthy development periods are to be accepted, it is still frustrating to see ideas once conceived as original being used coincidentally by the likes of *Half-Life* and 'The Matrix'. "I think many of *Eden*'s unique qualities got zapped when *Half-Life* came out," laments Rummery. "It reminded people that FPS games needn't be just about shooting." It's further proof, as if it were needed, that many ideas are not simply invented by one individual – they have their *time*, where a number of people come to the same creative conclusion.

But *Project Eden* still has many qualities that Rummery confidently expects will hit the mark with gamers. The four characters have varied abilities and, while games like *Jet Force Gemini* incorporate a similar concept, *Eden* differs by having all four characters exist within levels at the same time. They are a typically varied bunch: Carter is the leader and is a good all-rounder, able to use various weapons and protected by good armour; Minoko is the female computer expert able to hack into terminals and door locks; Andreas is the engineer of the party, who is naturally good with machinery and communication devices; Amber is the hefty and somewhat slow robot of the team, with excellent armour and the ability to withstand harsh environments. The favourite flavours of videogame protagonists are ably represented, then. The gameplay and puzzle-solving dynamics this varied assortment of characters introduces should ensure that *Project Eden* isn't just another wannabe *Half-Life*. In fact, thinking is as high a priority as shooting for the *Project Eden* team. The promise of a fourplayer cooperative mode is an outstandingly salubrious prospect, too.

If this futuristic 'A-Team' of mercenaries somehow fails to impress, the list of devices and gadgetry at their disposal may win you over. Such an ingenious range is on offer that Rummery has likened its deathmatch option to "an updated version of *Spy Vs Spy*" – considered homage to another seminal title. In its singleplayer mode, however, *Project Eden*'s high-tech gizmos must be used to overcome many problems set throughout the game. A rover device, for instance, is a Big Trak-style vehicle which can be negotiated through small apertures. The gameplay possibilities with this one device alone are immense. Imagine a science laboratory contaminated with unbreathable chemical fumes and Amber, your robot, is either incapacitated or too unwieldy to enter the complex. If you still have a rover at your disposal it can be driven through the harmful gasses to release a switch or collect an object vital to your quest.

Mines, hovercams, and 'Aliens: The Director's Cut'-style sentry guns (which can be placed to protect areas) are all at your team's disposal. Interestingly, the action can be viewed from their perspective if you so wish. Despite offering an eclectic array of features, Core is keen to imbue *Project Eden* with an unusual brand of integrity. For its gadgets to work convincingly within the world, they need to be fully incorporated into the framework of the gameplay. Using a rover for one puzzle early on and then discarding the concept for shooting action later is not on the *Eden* team's agenda. The variable, dynamic situations this could engender promise to be captivating.

Some enemies will take vigilance to notice. At any moment a bystander walking towards the player may suddenly transform into one of Core's genetic monsters and rush your team



















Allowing the player to comprehensively coordinate the four members of the Urban Protection Agency will perhaps be Core's most difficult feat of ingenuity. Only one member of the team can be directly controlled, forcing the rest of the team to act independently. Similar attempts to incorporate such elements, as in *Evolva* (E85), have disappointed. Because each team member has key skills to overcome puzzles, the death of any individual could prove frustrating. To avoid these pitfalls, Gavin Rummery has implemented energy recovery stations and frequent save points

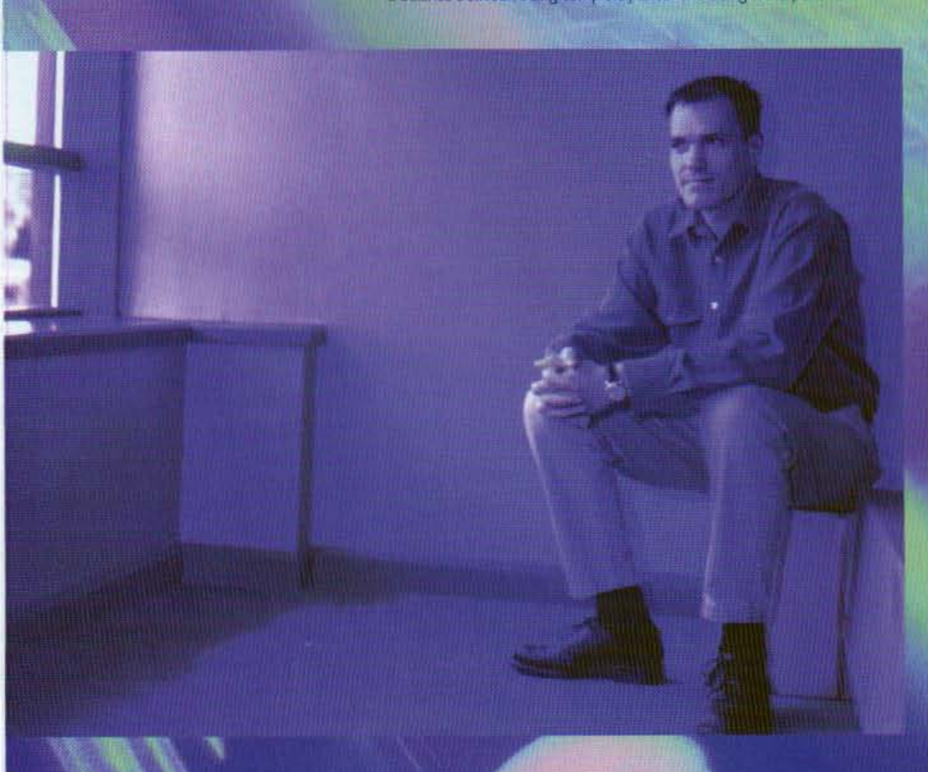
Morphing, hacking and dynamic environments

The central premise of sinister DNA manipulation has certainly gone to the heads of certain members of the *Eden* team. Enemies begin life in a very ordinary fashion: the occasional perp willing to risk his life to fuel a drug habit or the gang of thugs out for fights. Later, however, as your force descends the levels, enemies take on decidedly unconventional appearances.

"Having the ability to morph characters because of their genetic make-up gave us lots of scope for experimentation," enthuses Atkinson. After viewing one particular enemy onscreen – a vicious dog similar to those seen in *Resident Evil* – **Edge** was not, at first, particularly astounded. But with a quick movement of the mouse, the image alters and, in realtime, the dog transforms into something even Barbara Woodhouse would have trouble taming. The prospect of the dog rushing towards you, then gradually morphing into a Lovecraftian nightmare, is an unnerving and exciting prospect for any gamer. Humans, too, morph into weird and gruesome monsters. "This one," adds Atkinson "turns into a four-legged spider which spits out smaller spiders between its legs." A few other members of the *Project Eden* team laugh, nervously.

The tension factor has also been taken into account. Rather than taking the stealth approach, Core has opted instead for both surprise and time pressures. An indestructible monster similar to *Resident Evil*'s Tyrant may be included and, while some enemies will be conspicuous, others will take some vigilance to notice. At any moment an innocuous bystander walking towards the player may suddenly transform into one of Core's genetic monsters and rush your team. Hacking will also deliver quick bursts of adrenaline at key points. Almost acting like a subgame, accessing computers or door mechanisms will be frantic affairs. With enemies fast approaching, the player must quickly stop the spinning dials which come up on the screen at the correct moment to trigger the lock. The harder the mechanism to hack, the more dials there are to deal with.

Each level has its own distinct atmosphere and setting (one example was modelled on Liverpool Cathedral) but also promise to be dynamic in their own right. This is hardly something new yet Rummery promises that linearity will be avoided – the player should discover their own route through the game, with unusual and unexpected detours. "*Unreal* was a great game," he adds, "yet the levels were just too vast. We have tried to maintain a balance between being completely linear and being too expansive."





A cartoon interlude

After a few hours with this ominous, apocalyptic and enormously impressive adventure, **Edge** finds its encounter with another big Core project almost surreal. Suddenly, the dark and sinister world of *Project Eden* is replaced by the vibrant *Herdy Gerdy*. Now, here really is a Disneyland paradise, replete with all God's wonderful creatures. Though still rough around the edges (which is why Core is reluctant to release screenshots) *Herdy Gerdy* is looking absolutely sumptuous. Think *Ocarina of Time*, but with art created by the animators behind 'Aladin'.

The main character is a headstrong boy who is sent out to discover the mystery behind the strange happenings in the world. Along with challenges which are given to him at key moments he must attempt to restore order to the land, which includes herding up the races of creatures that inhabit it. Core promises an open world to explore, yet with enough structure to prevent endless wandering. Already, the animation and the environments look impressive. Multiple textures are employed for all sections to prevent blurring. Cave surfaces actually display multiple degrees of 'roughness', while touches such as butterflies flying between tree branches and alighting upon the grass before your character are particularly breathtaking.

Smith tells **Edge** that *Herdy Gerdy* could be Core's next monster – the next *Tomb Raider*, even. While companies talking up products does not come as much of a surprise to **Edge**, *Herdy Gerdy* could well be a new kind of *Zelda*, if not quite as mainstream a behemoth as Lara's vehicles. Still, this is no small boast for a game not yet a year into its life. Just glancing around the room where all this is taking shape is reminiscent of films shot in the '60s, exploring the work ethic of Walt Disney's animation teams. Though on a smaller scale, drafts, tracings, drawings and sketches litter the place. To a great extent Core is going, quite literally, back to the drawing board for *Herdy Gerdy*. **Edge** predicts the game will be better for it.

An audience with Adrian Smith

Though Adrian Smith has exchanged the coder's keyboard for the reigns of management, it is clear that his enthusiasm for playing games remains intact. Littered around his office (amongst the Lara Croft merchandise) are a number of toys any gadget junkie would die for. Though not quite a 'Big' scenario, a room containing remote-controlled vehicles, including a three-foot-long helicopter, is surely an incentive for any aspiring teenage programmer: to the question "When can I have my own corporate games room?", the parental-style response could be "Not until you have helped sire the most iconic character in videogame history, dear." Smith, clearly, has. **Edge** raids the mind of the man in charge of Lara's future.

Edge: How did the whole concept of *Tomb Raider* come about?

Adrian Smith: The main driving force of the idea was Toby Gard. If I put my hand on my heart, Toby was instrumental in *Tomb Raider* – he drew Lara, after all. But there were a lot of people who got involved in those early days with setting up the character and incorporating camera systems and setting it in Egypt. It was a very long development process.

Edge: Did you have any input into the idea behind *Project Eden*?

AS: No, although everybody from the testers to the producers had some involvement in *Eden* since it was started. Most of that team were the original *Tomb Raider* team. We discussed *Eden* straight after the first *Tomb Raider* game. It was Gavin who said he had a great idea for a game.

Edge: How much of a problem can it be when original ideas become stale due to lengthy development times?

AS: Yes, it is a problem. It's not so bad in this building because we're harsh with the development process and we push our people a little bit more. Two years is a long time in anyone's life to do anything. We are quite keen to keep times down so that games are still of a high quality but don't get left behind. We're very focused here. We have very small teams and we put a lot of emphasis on good teams, especially the creative side. We keep our design documents open. A good example is *Tomb Raider* – there was no water in the original design, which opened up a whole new area of the game.

Edge: How difficult is it to stop information about games leaking out?

AS: Fairly difficult. We at Core are quietly having to live with the legacy of *Tomb Raider*. People have picked up on the idea that we have spent a good chunk of time working on the next-generation projects – I won't call that PS2 or X-Box or Dolphin, I just categorise them as next-generation products. We are very fortunate in that, because of our relationship with all those manufacturers, we get preferential treatment. Which is great because our guys love to get their hands on the latest technology. So for a time we've probably been as quiet as we have ever been.

Edge: How many games are Core working on a the moment?

AS: Six. Along with *Tomb Raider* and *Eden* there is *Herdy Gerdy* which we are hoping will be the next massive *Tomb Raider* kind of thing. It's a very different kind of game. It was one of the products Sony saw at the conceptual stage and said it was something they wanted for PlayStation2.

Edge: Do you think Core games could be left in Lara's shadow?

AS: Certainly, I think Lara Croft has done a number of things. It has raised and pushed the quality of videogames that have been going for a good couple of years in this building. But also it shows up the gap between a great-selling game and good-selling game. Fortunately for Core, *Tomb Raider* was a complete anomaly. Will there ever be another game like it? I certainly don't think so.

Edge: So, is there life left in Lara?

AS: I think the life will come with the next generation of hardware. We have been working on it for a long time and it will be a whole new thing. Everybody knows she's linked heavily with Sony and the PlayStation and it's been a very successful game. It might be possible to move Lara to a new game, but *Tomb Raider* is *Tomb Raider*. I don't know how we can break those shackles. *FIFA* goes out every year. How can they change that?

Edge: How did you react to the poor reception of Dreamcast *Tomb Raider* both critically and commercially?

AS: I think it was and it wasn't a success. We made no bones about it, it wasn't a separately developed product and I think today's consumers know what they want and specifically developed products are important. There were a number of reasons for this. One, we wanted to support Sega and it would have taken us a long time to go back and do it differently. We were keen to get the game out. I don't think we rushed it but it was a conversion from PlayStation to Dreamcast.

Edge: Have you experienced any difficulties developing for PS2?

AS: Not specifically. Yes, there are some constraints like texture memory which everyone goes on about. It's a limiting factor but I guarantee that if you had a hundred meg of texture memory we would still say that. The stakes have been raised so much that artists' imaginations run away with them. They want to do so much. It's a very powerful machine.

Edge: What is Core like when deadline hits for a product?

AS: It's all hands to the deck. With *Tomb Raider* every year – myself and the team, the testers and other people, live in this building for two months. We get the beds out and cat nap for a couple of hours every night. I just bring in a whole load of clothes and live in this building. There's a lot of fun in that but there can be a lot of stress in it too. It adds to the whole atmosphere. We go through highs and lows and we'll give up and go to the cinema one night and come back after a meal ready to start again.

Edge: How do you keep teams motivated and loyal to Core?

AS: I think creative freedom is important to anybody who works with us. We don't like to single out any one creative genius on a team. Everyone has a part to play and it's like a chain. Creative people are not too bothered about financial rewards, they're bothered about actually enjoying the job. We have a very low turnover of staff. I can't remember when the last person left.

Edge: Finally, to end on a Lara note, how do you handle her marketing? She seems to get everywhere nowadays...

AW: I think we have been fairly selective. I would liken our approach to a James Bond who was very selective on the equipment he uses. She has become so visible that it seems like she's everywhere yet the actual Lara endorsements are very few in number.



"I think creative freedom is important to anyone who works for us. We don't like to single out one creative genius on a team. Everyone has a part to play. We have a very low staff turnover"



















Each level sports its very own mood and characteristics to prevent repetition, and designs is said to be dynamic. An abandoned zoo, for instance, provides puzzles revolving around cages which can either help or hinder the team. Height and depth have also been used to improve the nuances of gameplay. Attacking above from girders promises to be both an exciting and vertiginous experience. Cleverly, *Project Eden* swaps smoothly back and forth between first and thirdperson views. It's even possible to view the legs and feet of your character while in firstperson mode

THE FUTURE OF PL



Photography: Elena Dorfman

AYSTATION2


"Well, this looks like as good a day as any to take over the videogame world"

Sony's entry to the next generation has been a mixed one. With this in mind, Edge headed off to San Francisco with a *big* bag of questions for one of the PS2's chief evangelists...

Foster City, California. Silicon Valley country, now a more visible statement of America's ongoing love affair with technology than ever before. During the limo ride here via the freeway from central San Francisco, billboards litter the roadside proclaiming their individual spins on the dot.com revolution with about as much subtlety as a house brick. If this most optimistic of phenomena really is about to fall on its overweight behind, it seems no one has yet told America. Or maybe the call came and it simply wasn't listening.

In this environment **Phil Harrison** seems slightly out of place. An ex-pat who started out designing games on a freelance basis back in the day (Amiga owners may remember one of his – *Myth*, published by System 3), he clambered into Sony's comfy-looking bed in 1993 as product development director, but retains a distinctly un-American air of self-deprecation and forthrightly British sense of humour.

Which is not to say he can't do the hard sell. This is, in fact, his stock in trade. As vice president of thirdparty relations and R&D one of his roles is to evangelise PlayStation2, attending the likes of GDC to explain to developers exactly why this piece of hardware deserves their fickle attentions.

It's lunchtime, and, on a bench outside the building which once housed the Sony-owned 989 Studios (it's number 989 on the street, you see), your correspondent partakes of tobacco in the Californian sunshine while a nearby fountain makes several spluttery attempts to deliver an air of tranquillity before giving it up as a bad job. Harrison picks his way through a styrofoam container brimming over with sushi.

The questions commence.

Edge: First things first: what's your take on Sony's performance with the Japanese launch?

Phil Harrison: Well, fantastic. We said a long time ago that we would come out with PlayStation2 during the winter time – we set the March 4 date back in September in 1999 which was a brave thing to do and we achieved it. You know we had more software selling to the market in Japan in the first 30 days of the PlayStation2 than anyone else in the industry. I see a lot of achievement in the fact that there were six or seven companies that had games ready for launch. I think that's great.

Edge: You're not disappointed with all the criticism you've received?

PH: Well...

Edge: Strictly in terms of must-have software at launch...

PH: The success of PlayStation is assured over many years of growing software. It's not all make or break on the releases that you have day one. I think that what we demonstrated with the launch software of PlayStation2 is an excellent indicator of the performance and power of the machine and the breadth and depth of support that the industry has behind us. And any consumer that may have read negative comments about that should do their own research and figure these things out for themselves. But they should remain confident in what's going to happen down the line in that there are over 250 games in development from every leading development team in the world.

Edge: With the exception of Nintendo and Sega.

PH: Oh yes. [Grins]

Edge: So, what about the clearly tangible failings, such as the trick allowing Japanese users to use Region 1 DVDs?

PH: Well, I would not in any way describe that as a 'tangible failure'.

Edge: Well, wasn't there a mistake that had to be addressed by the reissue of new drivers?

PH: It was never our intention to include that feature, it was just an accident of the way that that software driver was written and that will be corrected.

Edge: Is that something that could have been avoided, had you not been forced to meet March 4, meaning that you would have had more time to test?

PH: Well, I think it is obviously something that we would prefer not to be in there but it does not spoil the experience of the consumer using the machine and it is not a fault in the

hardware or software. It's just a feature that is now still in there which we will obviously correct. I think that with a technology as sophisticated as PlayStation2, there are going to be situations where things happen that you don't expect. I'm pretty pleased with the quality and reliability of the machine – it's absolutely 100%.

Edge: What about the reputed Sony stock price falter when the memory card problems came to light?

PH: I can't say for sure how the stock price goes up and down in relation to any particular announcement or particular event. You also you have to remember that the PlayStation is a very very significant part of Sony's corporate profits and success. So there are obviously going to be people – particularly the investors, the people who own our stock – who are very keen to watch our performance and to watch our success. And I think that when these rumours went around regarding recall, which I stress were completely unfounded and certainly didn't come from us, that maybe some stockholders got nervous but they are now obviously realising that it was an immature reaction on their part.

Edge: What did happen with unhappy consumers at launch?

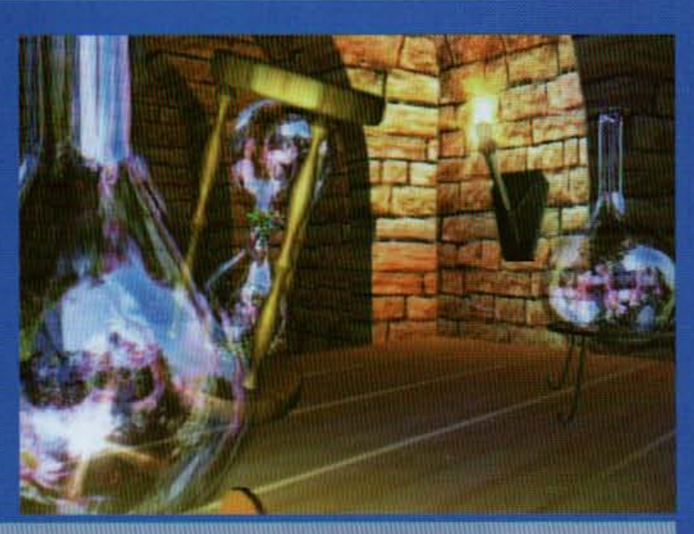
PH: We have had 344 telephone calls, consumers saying that they had experienced some difficulty with the DVD drivers, which was resolved by a reinstall with the design, and that's it.

Edge: Don't you worry about all the misinformation that circulated on the Net at the time of launch? You may dismiss it as rubbish, but it's rubbish that reaches thousands of people.

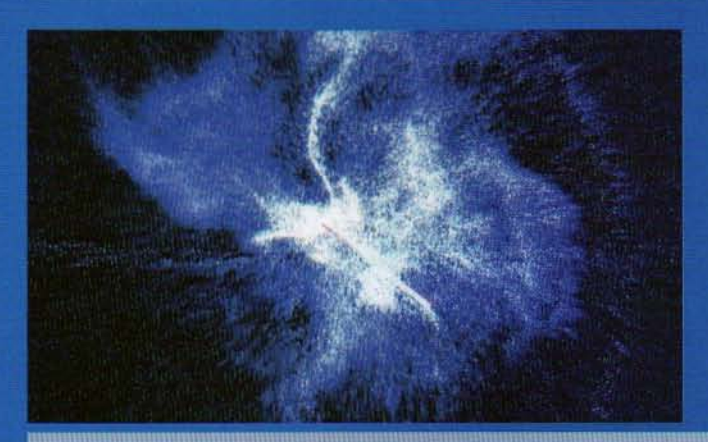
PH: Yes, it does. I think that there are two things you can deduce from that. One is: don't believe everything you read on the Internet. And, joking aside, it is also indicative of the worldwide cultural significance of the introduction of PlayStation2. An interesting fact is that on the weekend of March 4, when PlayStation2 came out, there were 365 different stories on US television about the launch of the console. I'm not talking about Japan, I'm talking about in the US – there were 365 different stories; we have a list from our agencies. This was all around the US, on local TV stations, everywhere, which is astonishing! Now I think maybe, in my wildest dreams, I would have been kind of happy if CNN had covered it or maybe one of the major financial or business news TV programmes had covered it with regard to the significance to Sony the corporation.

"I can't say for sure how the stock price goes up and down in relation to any particular event. You have to remember that the PlayStation is a very significant part of Sony's corporate success"





The Sony R&D facility at Foster City is focusing on three things: character behaviour, digital media interfaces, and advanced rendering techniques. These stills come from a demo clearly devoted to the latter element of research. The scene is generated using multiple passes, and creates perhaps the most realistic-looking PlayStation2 visuals seen to date





This hi-res particle animation routine really has to be seen in action to be believed. "We're working with PlayStation2 as our platform [for R&D in graphical representation]," says Harrison, "but we're thinking to the future. There's a lot of innovation and some ideas will be beyond the scope of the hardware." Is there a PS3 dev kit lying around?

But for 365 consumer news broadcasts to cover it, this is obviously bigger than anything any of us had really imagined.

Edge: Going back to the DVD drivers, are they upgradeable?

PH: Well, there are certain things that are fixed – the MPEG2 and audio decoding are in hardware, for example. But wrapped around that there are certain things you can do in software. Obviously, PlayStation2 has the same functionality as a DVD player that you would see on the high street today together with all the menu and selection, but it is possible through software upgrades in future that you might see some additional features which we haven't yet decided upon.

Edge: PlayStation2 seems to have rapidly gained a reputation as being a bit of a tough nut when it comes to coding. What do you think about that reputation?

PH: I think you have to take that with a pinch of salt. All new technologies are challenging, because they are by definition different. And something that is as powerful and as complex as PlayStation2 is going to introduce new challenges. There is a very specific area of PlayStation2 that is going to challenge. It is a complex piece of technology that has no parallel. It's not like it's a slightly different version of what we had on PlayStation1, it's not like it's a different version of what we saw on other games systems or in the PC. It is a brand new piece of technology and there will be some programmers that get it quicker than others.

Edge: So who's getting it right now?

PH: Well, I think you will have to see who's not been getting it now! But as the tools and the technology get more sophisticated, programmers start getting comfortable with the micro-coding, you'll start to see some people with big light bulbs illuminating over their heads.

Edge: What about the vector units? They can pretty much do...

PH: Anything, and that's the beauty of the architecture. It's also very liberating for programmers because they realise that they can now harness the performance of PlayStation2 and direct it in multiple ways. One is obviously in rendering 3D graphics and doing complex lighting and complex animation that takes a lot of horsepower. But the new area, which is really interesting, is all of the other things you can do like physics, behaviours, simulation, things that you hadn't been able to do in the past. If we go inside I'll draw a chart to demonstrate what I mean.

Getting emotional

Walking into the nondescript grey building, with its grey carpets and grey walls, does not prepare the visitor for what lies within its inner recesses. Approaching a metallic door, Harrison reaches for his security card which he waves over a sensor before proceeding to play his right hand, palm down, upon a glassy panel. Some form of scanning process whirrs into life, tracing the shape, form and even temperature of his digits. The door remains locked. Now comes the third and final part of the entry ritual: a security code is punched into a key pad (the five-note melody from 'Close Encounters' does not accompany this, oddly). All this because PlayStation2 dev kits have resided beyond the portal for longer than Harrison is willing to admit.

Inside a meeting room crammed floor to ceiling with every piece of Sony-branded consumer tech device imaginable, Harrison picks up a marker pen and addresses a whiteboard.

PH: This is where you've got 'Time'. And on this axis you've got what I would call the 'Key' factor. The 'Key' factor is the performance and the sophistication of the 3D engine, the kind of sum of all the parts which go into making the game and it's sort of

how you as a journalist and a reviewer of software can say: game A has much better technology than game C.

There are fundamentally two different development methodologies. The traditional methodology of a transform model has an effectively zero learning curve to get quite a nice performance relatively quickly. So through very little technical investment you can get a reasonably well-performing 3D technology based on a traditional transformation model. With this approach you have your predefined content in memory and you are manipulating and transforming that content in realtime; you are moving your camera through a large database of geometry which makes it look like the city in *Ridge Racer* or a cavern in *Tomb Raider*, for example. And then you have your dynamically moveable objects, your cars, your people, your balls or whatever, which are being manipulated by the software program but moved around in realtime based on predefined geometry.

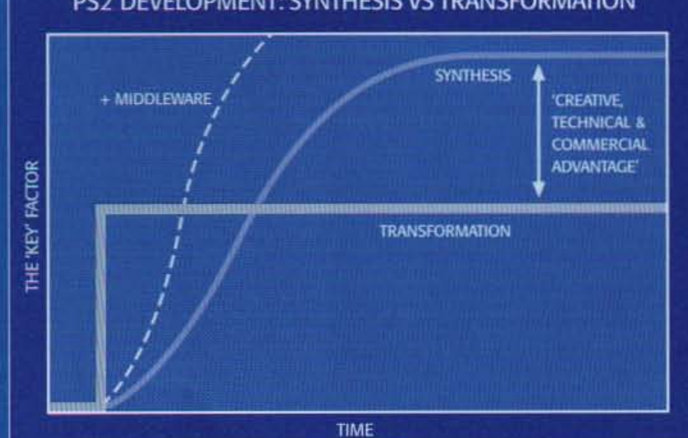
Now, the new way of doing things is the synthesis method, which has a curve a bit more like this [refers to chart], and the synthesis model is very much what the R&D group here is promoting. It's a new development technology which takes everything we've learned in the transformation world, keeps it, builds upon it and then adds a whole bunch of new elements and that is generating content procedurally inside the engine, inside the hardware of PlayStation2. Now that's where the vector units come into their own because they have the performance to generate in realtime enormous amounts of content, be it 3D graphics, sounds, or the behaviour of a character, something that hasn't been predefined by artists or predefined by game designers necessarily: although they may tweak them, they may be involved in the creation of those rules, the concept itself is generated in realtime inside the machine. That difference is going to be the creative and technical and ultimately commercial advantage that software benefits from. This is something that, and you can see by this curve, takes a lot longer to implement than the traditional development market, but once you get down that pathway and start build up this sort of expertise you're going to make



Another ex-Sony/Psygnosis employee is responsible for this rotating head routine. Realtime lighting and randomised vertices work in correlation with audio data



PS2 DEVELOPMENT: SYNTHESIS VS TRANSFORMATION



This is how Phil Harrison maps out what he perceives to be the performance leap available to developers willing (and able) to embrace the PlayStation2 synthesis methodology. He believes that the introduction of middleware – of which new elements seem to be appearing by the week at the moment – simply gives developers shortcut routes to a higher pitch on the 'Key' factor axis.

a very significant performance leap.

Edge: What sort of concepts are being born using this model?

PH: I'll show you one, actually. Many games have a landscape of some description and those are often based on an artist saying, 'Okay, we'll have some deserts here and some mountains here,' or whatever, and you end up with this enormous database of geometry and you have to finish the world at some point. So inevitably there is some fictitious and rather convenient mechanic in the story that stops you falling off the edge of the world. It might be that the game takes place in a large valley and there's no way out of the valley or that through some other game design mechanic you are prevented from going too far from your home base – whatever, we've seen it a million times. Many driving games are today effectively driving in a trench – the sides of the trench are houses, trees or valleys or whatever to stop you having that infinite view of the world. One of the demonstrations that we'll show you is realtime, procedural generation of an infinite landscape that requires no predefinition of texture or geometry, it all happens inside the engine of PlayStation2.

The dream team

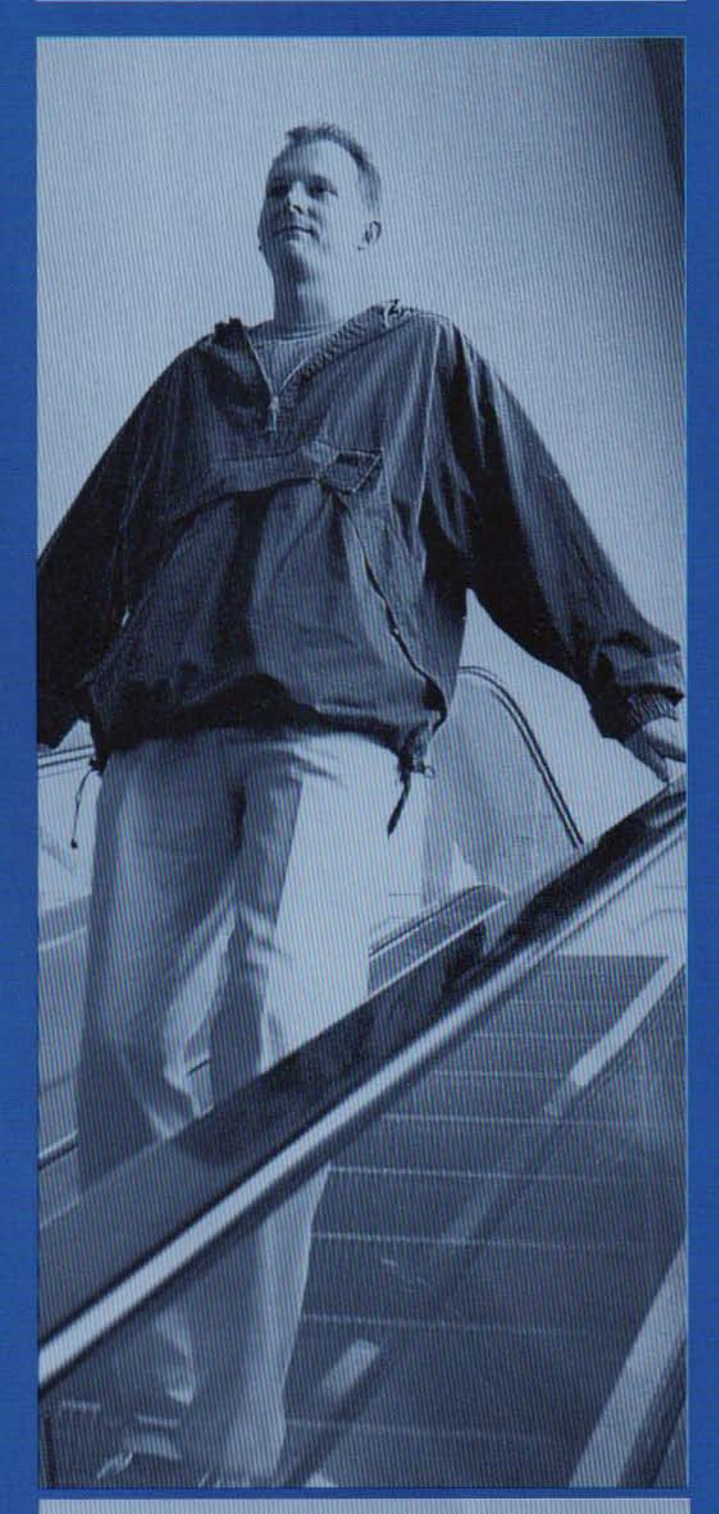
It's decided that a better place to get a taste of how Sony is using synthesis would be down the corridor, where a dozen or so programming specialists, led by ex-Psygnosis technical guru Dominic Mallinson, reside. There is not a game demo in sight – this is, as Harrison is at pains to point out, purely a research and development facility, where coders are given freedom to push PlayStation2 in seemingly any direction so long as the end result is capable of making bystanders coo in admiration. The team's backgrounds are as diverse as their wardrobes, ranging from recent graduates to slightly older hands, one of whom has a CV which boasts CGI work on 'Tron' (the movie, not the videogame). Harrison believes that few other pure videogame technology R&D labs exist in the world. The unit, which has been assembled over the last two years, offers up the kind of experimental atmosphere that sends him spinning off into new realms of flight and fancy.

PH: Other examples of synthesis would be in a game that uses natural environments – trees, flowers, etc. The human brain through the eye is incredibly good at recognising repetitious patterns and that is what spoils many games – it's what destroys the suspension of disbelief when you drive down that road and see ten identical trees come towards you. It looks odd even though each one has been rendered in the most beautiful way. The fact that they are all the same is a shame, and one of the things that you can do in the synthesis model is to create algorithmic trees, bushes, etc. Let's use this tabletop as an example. If I wanted to put this table in the game, I could somehow photograph or scan this wood texture, or I could fractally generate it in realtime, if we had time to have every table in the game subtly different or perhaps more realistic for some reason. Another more realistic example could be the generation of bricks so that are all different. Or clouds in the sky being more believable – rather than being that beautiful sort of photograph of a beautiful sunset that you see every level, there is actually some dynamic experience to it.

Edge: But if the bricks in a dungeon are being generated in this fashion, does this not mean that if you leave a location and then return to it then the bricks are going to look different than they did before?

PH: I know what you mean but you can generate things the same way every time so that although every brick is different, it is different in the same way.

Edge: So the 'seed' stays the same.



Going up?



During **Edge**'s visit, Sony's R&D staff presented a fascinating hardware demo which showed just how easily PlayStation2's USB ports could affect the way users interact with games. Plugged into the host console, a bottom-of-the-line, PC-compatible USB camera was used as kind of motion-tracking device, the TOOL dev kit (behaving exactly as a normal PS2 console would) interpreting the digital image data and translating the movements of a plastic wand (above) into the behaviour of a ball and chain onscreen. Expect Japanese developers in particular to have a field day with such simplistic but immediately effective functionality as this.

PH: There might be things that you do want to be different.

Edge: Sky?

PH: Yes, the sky is one, water is another one, and also autonomous characters like birds – you might want them just sort of flying around based on a believable flocking behaviour but in a dynamic way that is different. Or, over a period of time, trees grow, flowers appear through the seasons, roads get dirty, skid marks build up over time, walls of buildings get graffiti on them, paint flakes on window frames. Things like that are all entirely possible. The only limitation is people's imagination and that the focus, correctly, remains on gameplay. But I think that once programmers and artists and designers are comfortable with the technology they will start to push things to new boundaries.

Edge: How does the Emotion Engine tie in with this?

PH: The Emotion Engine is synthesis – that's what it is, and the ability to elicit an emotional reaction from the player is based upon being able to deliver a game experience or an entertainment experience, because we're not just talking about games here but an entertainment experience that is believable or is a version of reality that is interesting. We're not always talking about pure reality – I'll show you some stuff which is certainly not based on reality but the Emotion Engine has the ability to, within a piece of software, imbue a product with the hooks that are as significant as a director putting a good plot line into a movie or an author writing stuff into a book.

Edge: Can you elaborate?

PH: Well, there are two things that make a movie work – well, there are many things, but I'll just give you an example – 'Schindler's List' – an incredibly emotive plot and storyline done with sensitivity in a very compelling way. I don't know whether you've seen the film but there is one scene with the little girl in the red dress – that just pulled at the heart strings, and that is something that we're not going to figure out tomorrow or in the near future, but we are moving towards putting it into games – that same level of emotional response, or the elements of a funny book, or a great piece of music or television. Remind me to come back to television.

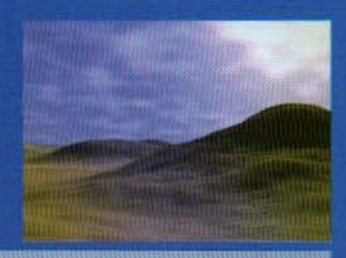
Edge: Aren't you slightly concerned that there are still so many developers out there who appear to struggle with the transformation model, let alone asking to work on synthesis-driven games?

PH: No, I'm not. I think that some will get it quicker than others and I think that there are two interesting parallels in what happened in 1994 when PlayStation development started going over to developers. If you think back to 1994, well, you chronicled this in detail, you could go from almost one month in **Edge** to the next where all of the console games were in 2D and then suddenly games started to appear in 3D on consoles and for many developers going from 2D to 3D was a massive challenge and a massive technological shift and everything got reinvented – the tools changed, the art changed, there were massive implications to the game design, some consoles never made it. And I think you've covered this well in the past – the idea that some games should never have been in 3D but adding those letters '3D' to the end of a title meant an awful lot from a marketing point view. With PlayStation to PlayStation2, we haven't changed the rule set so fundamentally. Everything is still in 3D. We are obviously better at it, there is a lot of sophistication, but some of the basic game concepts haven't changed. This does not have to be a revolution, this can be an evolution, and in fact I think it *should* be an evolution because if we move too quickly we'll leave the consumer behind and we have to make sure that we continue to deliver wonder to seven million PlayStation owners who are out there around the world.

Edge: There's no getting away from the fact that PS2 had probably the best prelaunch hype of any console, and then the games appeared and there was a sense of disappointment. Maybe it was more of a subtle upgrade than the revolution some expected.

PH: Yes, but I think you'll see it happen quicker than you expect. Don't get me wrong, I think that the games that we've seen on the PlayStation2 so far are fantastic but I think that there are a few things that are going to start happening in the next few months with regard to speed and the implications for games that will bring, well...





These two scenes show the synthesis approach in action, creating desert scenes from microcode routines. Detail on both the sky and land is remarkably effective

Jagged edge

Following a brief video demonstration of the Japanese-developed RPG, *Dark Cloud* – which still looks every bit the killer PS2 title – talk turns back to launch software and a topic that has been raised in many reader letters that have arrived at the **Edge** office. Harrison remains typically unfazed at further talk of any perceived PlayStation2 shortcomings.

Edge: Looking at the PS2 software to date, there has been a lot of criticism of jaggies in *Dead or Alive 2* when held up against the Dreamcast version. Does PS2 have antialiasing in the traditional sense? There appears to be a fair amount of confusion out there.

PH: PlayStation2 has hardware antialiasing, on a primitive level. When I say 'primitive level', I don't mean basic

level, I mean graphically primitive polygon level – which means the developer or programmer can choose how to do the antialiasing. It's a very flexible system. You can also do full-screen antialiasing if you wish to dedicate that amount of effort to it – that's something developers have to decide upon themselves.

I think that the reason that the games you've seen so far which haven't had it switched on is not a hardware issue but a software issue, and developers, for whatever reason, have not made the most of that feature.

Edge: Are you saying that performance doesn't have to take a hit through using antialiasing? Let's set the record straight.

PH: Yes.

Edge: It's not like simply throwing a switch, though, is it? It must be a great deal more complicated than that otherwise the software out there would be making use of it.

PH: Well, if you have to think about it, and it's something that you probably have to design into graphics right from the beginning – and I'm speculating because I didn't write these games – I'm speculating that they did not have the opportunity to include that feature.

Edge: Is it a video RAM issue?

PH: No, it's got nothing to do with that.

Edge: Okay, what about those who've suggested that a smaller amount of video RAM will prevent PlayStation2 games from looking that much better than DC titles?

PH: Well, that's fundamentally wrong and the reason that it's wrong is that if you applied that transformation model where you think of all of your geometry being in 'A' RAM and all of your textures being in 'B' RAM then you are not using PlayStation2 in any way like an efficient way. You're like using it to do something that it wasn't even really designed to do. So, if development is to continue along the old 32bit development methodology, then you might see some… I'm trying to think of the right way of describing to you… [Pauses] If development is to continue along the old methodologies PlayStation2 hardware will not be maximised and game content will not be delivering the kind of experience that it was intended to deliver.

Just reading a list of numbers is somewhat irrelevant. You have to understand the bus architecture between the various components and how data gets through and around the system. And that is actually the genius of redesigning the PlayStation 2 – that it overcomes some of the fundamental problems of sheer bus speed and slow access to video. There is no other system that has this advantage.

Watching the TV

Edge's allotted time at Sony's R&D facility has come to an end, but several questions remain unanswered. Perhaps sensing this – or maybe because he's simply a decent fellow – Harrison offers your correspondent a lift back into San Francisco city centre, where he himself resides ("The area's been christened Multimedia Gulch," he says, "because of the sheer weight of Web startups in the area"). With a fresh audio cassette loaded, **Edge** sets out to look further into the PlayStation2's future as Harrison sees it.

Edge: You said earlier that you wanted to talk about television.

PH: I'm into the idea of how much things are going to change when the entire product does not have to be shipped on a single disc, and that maybe the core engine – or rules, if you will – of the product ship on the disc, and then via the connection to the network you can be delivered episodes. And those episodes could be delivered on an as-needed basis, or you finish level one and you download level two and off you go. Or you want extra tracks for your driving game, you can maybe buy them. But the really interesting thing for me is the idea of the shared cultural experience that you get from a whole community of







The true perils of an **Edge** photoshoot

gamers, all experiencing the same thing at the same time. And this is what I'm most interested in experimenting with. And the idea of a game or level or a story or a new scenario, which you could download in a couple of seconds at any time over a period of a week, but it can only be played from a particular moment in time. And there's a key, which is accessed off the network, which says at 9pm on a Tuesday night, or whenever, all of you can experience this game. Now maybe it's a multiplayer game but maybe it's also just a singleplayer experience. But you've then got the shared cultural experience of the next day – you're down the pub, you're at work, or you're in school, and you're like, "Wasn't that fantastic when you got to the end of that level and the blue dragon just came down and bit your head off?" or whatever. In the same way that we all talk about a great episode of 'The X-Files' or whatever. And that is going to change the fundamentals not only of how games are designed, but it's also going to change the relationship between the audience and producer of the game, given the fact that you can have feedback from the audience about what they like, what they didn't like. You can use the Web or the network directly to sample how much fun they had, where they got stuck, where it was too difficult. This is going to mean that the relationship between player and producer becomes much tighter, and much more closely monitored than say the Nielsen ratings for television programmes. I think this is a really positive thing, and obviously you would never abuse anybody's privacy in this, and there would never be any subterfuge in the way that this is done. I can state that now before anybody has any concerns about that: it will be done for the greater good of the game.

Now what this also means is that the best designers and the best creators can have multiple games series in production at any one time. We talk about games taking 18 or 24 months to develop, but I think we're going to move into an era where, theoretically, the game is never finished. And that the core engine might take six to nine months to write and that the first episode takes three months to write, but you could have a production team who would be employed to create multiple episodes, in the same way as a different director is used for multiple episodes of a drama. And so that one producer, or creator, could then go off and do the next engine for the next game, and if the first one was successful, you could have these multiple streams of games being live at any one time. Today, you've got to finish it, put it on a CD – and all of the content, all 50, 60, 70 hours – whatever the commercial realities demand – has to be on that disc. And that's a real shame because there's an inversely proportional number of people that actually see all of the content – you know, 100% see the first level, 70% see the second level and so on and so forth.

Edge: So how do you feel about games on epic scales?

PH: A movie studio cannot make 'Titanic's every time they release a film. They need to have a balanced portfolio, and it's very difficult for the games industry today to succeed in that way. Multiple price points will help, but the most important thing is that the way that we consume software is very much driven by retail shelf space. And as soon as retail shelf space becomes expanded infinitely online, there are a huge number of creative opportunities that get opened up, and a huge number of commercial pressures that get reduced or eliminated. And this is really, really exciting – we're about to go into a whole new world order.

Edge: So when will it happen and on what sort of scale?

PH: I don't know the answer to that one. All I know is that content will drive the adoption and penetration of the delivery mechanism. As soon as there is content there, it will form a critical mass that drives the take up and penetration of broadband infrastructure around the world. We are confident that PS2 is going to be a massive driver and influencer of broadband infrastructure into the home.

Edge: It must be frustrating having ideas that must be at least three or four years away from fruition.

PH: Well, I think it's safe to say that the world won't change overnight. We won't all wake up one morning and find a bit of fibre-optic cable sticking out of our living room wall and suddenly the whole business changes. But I think that if we're talking about – if we've learned anything from the Internet age – time compression happens at an alarming rate, and everything happens quicker and better than anybody predicts. If you go back over the last five years or ten years of the Internet generation, we've constantly beaten the most optimistic of projections about takeup rates, penetration, dollars spent, number of eyeballs, number of advertisers – whatever metric you want to use, we've beaten it by some massive percentage. And I think that the forces of commerce are even stronger behind broadband, because it involves television networks and a much higher level of content and a much bigger library of content with music and video and film being thrown into that, but the thing is it's going to make it more compelling and quicker.

Edge: But the ideas and concepts

You're down the pub and you're like, "Wasn't that fantastic when you got to the end of that level and the blue dragon bit your head off?"

behind new content don't even seem to have made it to planning stage. Is it fair to say that?
PH: I think that most of the work that needs to be done is in here [points to head]. Because we know how to put polygons on screens, we know how to make sound effects, we know how to screen video, we know how to – to use a television or motion picture industry parallel – build the sets and point a camera at them and move actors in front of them. The one thing that we haven't figured out yet is the scriptwriting and the way to deliver compelling content in an episodic form. That is, crucially, going to a) make the player want to come back for more, and b) make the advertisers, or the commercial partners – because I don't necessarily think that people are going to have to pay for games in the same way as they pay for games today – want to be involved. So the thought process that has to go into that is quite significant, and I think that there are developers who get it, and I think there are people who have already figured this out, and there are also people who have yet to even consider this.
Edge: Going back to some of the things you were talking about earlier, if you are saying that the PS2 hardware needs a special approach to make it work – the synthesis model clearly needs devotion – do you not think that that in itself will be challenging enough to developers, without them even worrying about rethinking the delivery method of games?
PH: No, I think you're underestimating the passion and the technical competence of the developers. I think that some will get it quicker and better than others, that's a fact of life, that's what makes this business so exciting, the fact that there is always change going on in the industry because today we might paint a picture of the industry where we think certain developers are the most technically advanced, or have it all figured out, without realising that there's a dark horse running up the outside that's going to come in at first place. For example, nobody had ever heard of Naughty Dog. Who would have thought that Naughty Dog would have sold nearly 20 million copies of *Crash* games around the world over the last four or five years? It was a rare success because it was a good game.

A modem 'solution'

Edge: What do you think about Microsoft's decision to make a modem available as an interim connectivity solution?
PH: Well there are a thousand modems available for PlayStation2 at launch. Any USB modem you like, just plug it straight in. Which is an often-overlooked aspect.
Edge: Will the system be able to be configured to use them, though?
PH: Sure, if the developer wants to have an application that talks to a USB modem to deliver multiplayer gaming, or a browser, or downloadable content – obviously based on the constraints of narrowband we aren't going to get much – but yeah, you can do that. Of course, we'll certainly permit that. Plus we're doing some work right now in the wireless space with digital cellphones, WAP3, etc, and imode in Japan. And you'll see some announcements from us shortly in that area, and that means some interesting connectivity options with what's happening in digital telephony.
Edge: Some people really are convinced that broadband is a waste of space and wireless comms is the real future.
PH: Well I think that wireless has some tremendous opportunities and advantages, but there is a fundamental limitation on the amount of stuff you can put in the available frequency bandwidth available on the airwaves. But what we're going to do is invest to deliver the best and fastest and fattest possible pipe of data into the home, which will be the most effective of downloading data into your PlayStation2 with its hard drive, etc, but perhaps more importantly, being able to upload data as well. PlayStation2 will also be the content provider as well as the content receiver. With cameras and microphones and video attached to the machine, this will now become a hub for the consumer creativity and entertainment and uploading stuff and sharing it with each other, and the machine acting as your kind of local entertainment server in the home, and that's really where we want to see this going.



"Now, let's see, where's the pint glass?"

Edge: Is there potential for a PlayStation2-branded WAP phone?
PH: So long as your question appears in the article in that exact wording, yes, there is a potential.
Edge: Finally, how do you think competitors view Sony nowadays?
PH: How do they perceive us? It's a really good question. It's a really good question. I think they perceive us in first place. And that's a good thing and a bad thing. I think that means everybody else is challenger. That just means we have to continue to be faster, better and more ambitious than they are. And from where I see it, I think we are.

TESTSCREEN

PERFECT DARK

The definitive monthly assessment of the world's latest videogames

Insert reality to continue

Here's a thought: there's no such thing as an arcade racer. This isn't as outrageous a claim as it may first appear. Think about it. The only reason what is still referred to as arcade-like racing existed in the first place was simply down to the fact developers didn't have enough CPU power to integrate realistic dynamics into their games. It's not that they didn't want to, simply that they couldn't. And so an approximation of the way a car handled became the norm, and gameplay ended up heavily dependent on who was doing the approximation. It was all very hit and miss.

In many ways it still is, of course. Nowadays a surprisingly delicate balance must be struck between realism and playability. With its two *Gran Turismos*, for instance, Polyphony tends to get it right. Others – and this includes newcomer Square with this month's *Driving Emotion Type-S* (see p74) – still have plenty of road to make up. On the whole, though, the resulting software is encouraging. Codemasters, responsible for the super-unrealistic *Micro Machines* franchise, is able to throw its mechanics at the diverse fields of touring cars and rallying and still manage to do a remarkable job.

Not every developer is managing the transition without hiccups, however. Sega, a company that for years has come up with some of the best ever arcade racers (including *OutRun* and *Super Monaco GP*, to name but two), appeared uncommitted to fully integrate comprehensive dynamics into *Sega GT* and the title ended up paying the price in deflated gameplay. Ironically, others within the same company lead the way. Yu Suzuki's *F355 Challenge* coin-op is a supremely balanced simulation that appears to be making its way to Dreamcast with playability intact (see p42).

Hence, if you prefer, there no longer should be such a thing as an arcade-type racing game. At least not in terms of dynamics. Videogaming is headed towards a crossroads where you have realistic racers heading one way and racing sims the other. And just as force-feedback steering wheels have made PC simulations such as *Grand Prix Legends* and *Rally Championship* unmissable rather than stupefyingly frustrating, there's no reason why – when properly done – realistic racing games shouldn't be as playable as their arcade ancestors. In fact, most people probably failed to realise how much of *Daytona USA* or *Sega Rally*'s dynamics were reality-based. And that hardly spoiled the fun, did it?





Evolution. No one would dare release a driving game with *OutRun*'s dynamics these days, so why do certain individuals feel so threatened by the realisation that arcade handling no longer exists?

Every issue, **Edge** evaluates the best, most interesting, hyped, innovative or promising games on a scale of ten, where five naturally represents the middle value. A game receiving a 'seven out of ten', for example, is a very competent title with noticeable flaws but which should still appeal to a considerable range of players. It does, after all, score two points above average and should therefore not be considered as such.

Edge's rating system is fair, progressive and balanced. An average game deserves an average mark – not, as many believe, seven out of ten.

Videogames on the Edge

Games the team kicked back with this month



Gradius IV (PS2) Konami

The *Gradius III* element of Konami's two-in-one package is best ignored, but part four serves as a harsh reminder of just how challenging a game can be.



Excitebike 64 (N64) Nintendo

Arriving just too late to be included in this month's testscreens, this 64bit update is proof of the richness of Nintendo's software back catalogue.



Samba de Amigo (DC) Sega

Any game reprising 'Magical Sound Shower', one of the legendary tunes from *OutRun*, simply could not be ignored by a teary-eyed **Edge** team.



Colin McRae Rally 2.0 (PS) Codemasters

Another game to miss this issue's review deadline by a whisker, *2.0*'s prolonged development time appears to have paid off, with some great multiplayer options.

Index



PERFECT DARK







The AI, for the most part, is exemplary. Opponents will attempt to pick up dropped weapons or disarm you, perhaps surrender, and even feign death







The innovation in *PD* comes from weapons' secondary functions and the game's many other gadgets. Transforming your laptop gun into a sentry gun is just one majestic touch. Others include floating spy cameras (top) and X-ray goggles (centre)

If ever a game demanded better technology, *Perfect Dark* is it. Appearing three years after *GoldenEye* and four years into the N64's existence, *PD* pushes Nintendo's console beyond the limits of its technical abilities, requiring you to invest in a Expansion Pak if you wish to indulge in anything other than a limited version of the glorious multiplayer options. **Edge** assumes most hardcore N64 devotees already own such memory-enhancing hardware, but for those who don't, it could prove one of the wisest investments they'll ever make. Without it, *PD* is massively restricted, but with just 4Mb of extra RAM it suddenly metamorphoses into the most astounding FPS experience currently available.

While the narrative, which sees Carrington Institute covert agent Joanna Dark battle the evil dataDyne corporation 23 years from now, isn't quite as adventurous as **Edge** had originally hoped, it does at least take you to an uncommonly varied set of locations as you infiltrate, deactivate, incapacitate and exterminate your way through nine missions spread over 17 levels (excluding bonuses). The majority of these span vast areas and are at least as sublimely designed as anything *GoldenEye* can offer.

Predictably, *PD* shares much with Rare's first FPS venture. Here, the levels are also split into three degrees of difficulty with the number of mission objectives increasing the harder the setting. If you fail to play through the higher difficulty levels then you're not getting the full experience – finish the game in its lowest setting and you'll walk away feeling that some of the elements appear disappointingly underused.

But the sensational beauty of *PD*, as with *GoldenEye*, is that while a specific appliance is occasionally required for certain tasks, most of the time you're free to deal with situations as you see fit. And it's the same for most of the mission objectives – few of them dictate an absolutely linear approach. Combine that with the size and complexity of some of the levels and you'll be surprised at the number of permutations available to you. In other words, it's an intelligently developed game that rewards

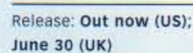
Format: **Nintendo 64**

Publisher: **Rare**

Developer: **In-house**

Price: **$60 (£40)**

Release: **Out now (US); June 30 (UK)**









***PD* has too many supreme touches to mention here. Suffice it to say, you won't find a better FPS**



intelligent play, the implications of which should not be underestimated: the resulting sense of immersion is unparalleled. It's what defines *PD* and *GoldenEye* as the best firstperson shooters the world has to offer.

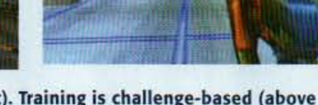
And that's only the oneplayer game. Rare has added a twoplayer co-operative option allowing two individuals to work together through the missionsm which – other than the occasional frame rate problem – is magnificent, introducing a whole new set of strategic options into the equation. Similarly inspired is the counter-operative mode, where one player controls Joanna while another forms part of the dataDyne troops.

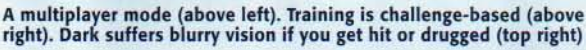
Then there's the combat simulator, where the most comprehensive set of multiplayer options yet seen resides. Aside from 30 challenges (anything from standard deathmatch to more inventive 'king of the hill'-type scenarios), and a few preset games on offer (free-for-all or teamwork-based), there's the main one- to fourplayer combat. You can add CPU simulants of varying personalities at any stage (a maximum of eight players per arena is imposed) and, if you wish, segregate everyone into teams (again, up to eight). Classic *GoldenEye* arenas make a return but many others have been specifically designed with multiplaying in mind, maximising refresh rate and gameplay. It's an exceptional addition to an already unequalled package.

If there is a gripe it would be a technical one. The frame rate, for anyone used to the smoothness offered by current PC FPS titles, is initially disillusioning but, after a while, chances are you'll be too engrossed in the action to notice. Twoplayer co-op and counter-op action has more significant moments









A multiplayer mode (above left). Training is challenge-based (above right). Dark suffers blurry vision if you get hit or drugged (top right)

It's an intelligently developed game that rewards intelligent play, the implications of **which should not be** underestimated: the **resulting sense of immersion** is unparalleled

of update trouble, particularly during more open areas, and fourplayer combat can also serve as a reminder of the host machine's limitations.

Regardless, *Perfect Dark* refines *GoldenEye*'s phenomenal gameplay while massively developing its multiplayer components. It fails to be as revolutionary on as many levels as its predecessor but, if you're a N64 owner, consider this utterly indispensable entertainment. And if you don't already possess Nintendo's console, then you really no longer have an excuse not to.

Edge rating:

Nine out of ten

DRIVING EMOTION TYPE-S





Keeping your racer on the black stuff with any degree of competence requires silly concentration levels and continuous directional input

By current standards the car models are a little on the basic side and motion blur is used liberally. At least the selection offers some desirable machinery

The last three months haven't been particularly good for videogaming's high-profile racers. Even before the race began, *Sega GT*'s attempt to overtake the *Gran Turismo* franchise had already been lost in the pit lane after the mechanics failed to agree on the correct gameplay settings. Some 30 days later, *Ridge Racer V* found its gearbox stubbornly stuck in reverse after turning up at the track offering nothing more than six-year-old play mechanics wrapped in pretty graphics. A month on, it's another codeshop's turn at the wheel.

Square must have smiled at the prospect of having the PS2 realism-racing market (even if such a concept is arguably extinct – see Testscreen Intro) all to itself after the expected announcement that *GT2000* wouldn't make the console's launch day. Yet given *Type-S*'s final state, management then presumably allowed the team to go on holiday, as if blissfully unaware that much was still to do.

The main play mode offers a choice of seven vehicles, five manufacturers and three tracks to try them out on. Every time you win a race your efforts are rewarded with cars and new circuits – so that once you've opened everything up you find 11 manufacturers, 40-odd models and seven racing venues (with an extra oval track available in time trial only). While an obvious penchant for Japanese marques is noticeable, the car range has been reasonably selected with EU

By exaggerating the amount **of wheel turn necessary to navigate at low speeds**, and doing the reverse for higher velocities, Square has **created one of the most obnoxious** handling models in recent history



The JGTC models can be a nightmare to control, even with all of the driving aids on. Get a corner right, though, and for a brief moment (nearly) all is forgiven



Format: **PlayStation2**	
Publisher: **SquareSoft**	
Developer: **In-house**	
Price: **¥6,800 (£40)**	
Release: **Out now (Japan); TBC (UK)**	



Given the detail level Square has included in the backgrounds and working dashboards it's a shame gear changes are not animated

representatives Ferrari, Porsche, BMW, Alfa Romeo and TVR also included. It's not the most balanced selection, however: its tendency to focus mostly on road-legal performance cars means that, consequently, the inclusion of a disappointingly limited range of All Japan Grand Touring Car Championship models and only two rally-prepared vehicles emerge as something of an afterthought.

Having seemingly learnt nothing from *Sega GT*'s structural problems, *Type-S* divides its races into four categories relating to vehicle performance and then allows you to enter higher-specced four wheelers against relatively feeble machinery. So, the moment you've won a category 2 car – say, a Subaru Impreza – from finishing first in a preliminary race, there are no safeguards to stop you from entering any remaining lowly category 3 events and pulling away from the Nissan Silvia types that permeate that particular division with monotonous ease.

But structure isn't *Type-S*'s major problem. **Edge** admires Square's brave attempt at implementing a new set of handling dynamics for players to experience but, in doing so, it has got the whole realism/playability equation drastically wrong. The developer may claim that this is as realistic a model as you'll currently find. This simply isn't so. By exaggerating the amount of wheel turn necessary to navigate the car at low speeds and doing the reverse for higher velocities, Square has come up with one of the most obnoxious handling models in recent history. After some practice all of the cars up to and including category 1 are manageable but the twitchiness of the JGTC vehicles becomes unbearable. And that's with all of the assists on – **Edge** challenges anyone to get a lap in without incidents in simulation mode *and* win that race.

Other problems include the inability to set up events for longer than five laps, disappointing AI, and horrendous loading times. It's a shame: it can still offer moments of genuine satisfaction. But, again, its handling model will cause most gamers to throw down their joypad in despair. Developers take note: it is the *semblance* of reality that gamers truly crave.





Like most licensed driving games nowadays there is a disappointing lack of polygonal damage – but at least cars flip over if you get it very wrong





The twoplayer mode can provide some laughs, while the racing school teaches you basic racing trajectories and braking points

Edge rating:

Four out of ten

POWERSTONE 2



Firing off several missiles from a sub while crashing into a glacier is typical of the visual hyperbole in *Power Stone 2*. As is the alien in the corner (left)

The first *Power Stone* was a revelation for gamers familiar with Capcom's excellence in just two dimensions. The expansive arenas and unfettered approach to power-ups had never been seen on a console before. Next to the comically exaggerated environments of the sequel, though, the original seems restrained. But while it may seem contradictory, this lack of restraint has actually resulted in a more balanced, finely honed title.

Sitting down to play *Power Stone 2* for the first time can be quite a confusing experience, since the amount of action onscreen can make it easy to lose track of your character. Stick with it for just a couple of rounds, though, and it quickly becomes second nature to navigate surroundings which make those of the original appear antiquatedly static. There are five basic locations in which to fight, as well as two boss stages and three extra stages not available in the oneplayer mode. This may not seem a lot, but all of the basic stages



The shop area (above) is more confined than the locations featured in the story mode, especially with four players





Format: **Dreamcast**

Publisher: **Capcom**

Developer: **In-house**

Price: **¥5,800 (£35)**

Release: **Out now (Japan) TBA (UK)??????**



feature further sub-areas as rounds progress. The Blue Sky Area, for example, commences on an airship, featuring three gun turrets, which slowly disintegrates until remaining combatants must continue to fight while skydiving. If you're lucky or wise, you'll pick up a parasol at this point to help slow your descent to the final part of the course, which is a multi-tiered arena featuring two catapults, a tank, and a waterfall that can all be used to your advantage.

On top of all this, there is a bewildering multitude of power-ups on offer. Long-range weapons, short-range weapons and health boosts feature alongside more bizarre articles, such as skateboards, mantraps and ball and chains. And the Power Stones themselves. These added an interesting new dynamic to the gameplay of the original, although their existence was at the expense of the other goodies. By toning down the impact of power fusion attacks in the sequel, bouts are more than just an attempt to obtain all three Power Stones, and are more free-roaming as a result.

There is also a campaign mode that encourages players to use as

Next to the comically exaggerated environments of the sequel, **the original looks restrained.** But while it may seem contradictory this has resulted in **a more balanced, finely honed game**

wide a variety of the items on offer as possible in order to unlock a range of new ones, which can be traded or combined to form new objects. Other play modes include a multiplayer option for up to four players, and both one and twoplayer story modes, each of which features two bosses. On the way to meet them for a final head-to-head, players are offered a choice of areas to fight in. Completing the game unlocks characters, items, arenas and special options.

In essence, *Power Stone 2* is about choice. With each character having pronounced differences in the way they play, one round of combat can involve everything from the Power Stones to power-ups and using the environment to your advantage – including the gun emplacements and catapults that are present in some arenas. Add to this the freedom of choice from the various play modes, and the number of features that can be unlocked, and this is a game that will engage your interest for some time. Given the time constraints of reviewing such a game for a monthly magazine, it is perhaps a good thing that **Edge** wasn't able to get hold of a coin-op cabinet to test VMU compatibility, though there's little doubt that this will further increase the longevity of this title. It seems a shame that the small user base of the Dreamcast will prevent it from tasting the widespread adulation that it certainly deserves.

Edge rating:

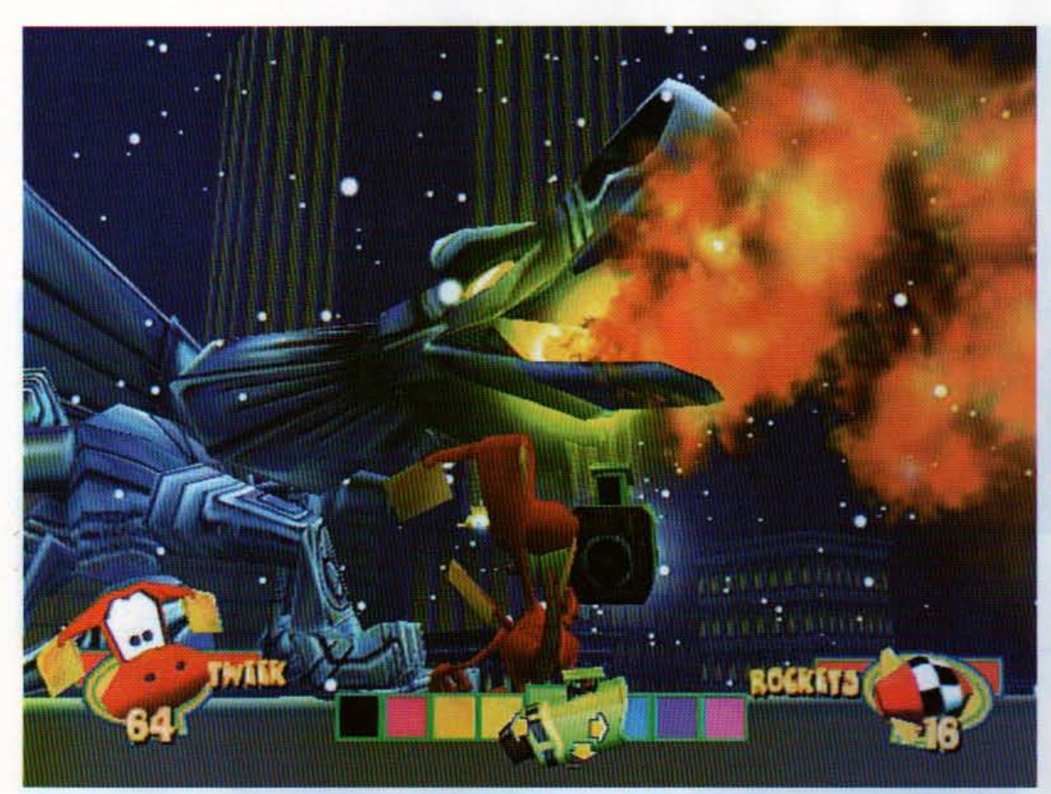
Eight out of ten





There are only two extra characters to unlock (top), but a slew of extra items can be unlocked or created in campaign mode (above)

FUR FIGHTERS









At the end of each of *Fur Fighters*' six worlds are the compulsory boss encounters. The bosses are genetically mutated relatives of the furry warriors who must be beaten to bring them back to their usual cuddly selves. Above, Tweek the dragon battles his mother Gwyneth at the end of the first world

Had Rare suddenly dropped its N64 development tools and produced a Dreamcast game, the result couldn't have been any more accomplished than *Fur Fighters*. The Rare influence shines through every aspect of the game: from its wonderfully stylised cartoon visuals to a quirky sense of humour. It also successfully combines various gameplay elements, challenging the player with shoot 'em up action, puzzles and platformery. It's the kind of gameplay mix that Rare frequently does so well, providing an impressively varied and entertaining videogame experience.

Bizarre Creations may have taken inspiration from Rare's back catalogue in developing *Fur Fighters* (aspects of *GoldenEye*, *Banjo-Kazooie* and *Jet Force Gemini* are clearly evident) but deserve enormous credit for producing such an accomplished Dreamcast action/adventure. It bucks a trend: while other companies are content to implement lazy conversions of their PC properties on Sega's machine, this is an eminently distinctive work.

Fur Fighters' plot involves the Blofeld-like cat General Viggo, who has typically sinister plans for world domination. To keep his furry enemies occupied while he embarks on these megolamaniacal activities, the feline villain has kidnapped all the Fur Fighters' babies and hidden them around the six areas of the game. He has also genetically modified parents and siblings into six monstrous bosses.

The objective, then, is obvious: to rescue all the babies and defeat the boss relatives to return them to their original state, before encountering Viggo in the ultimate furry face-off. However, the babies can only be retrieved by their own parent. This is the game's best feature. It is necessary to play as all six Fighters, each possessing specific skills and nuances, in order to reach the climatic battle with Viggo. The Fur Fighters Teleportation Device is used to swap between characters (as with *DK64*'s barrels) and these warp points are dotted around the environments at strategic points – often where it's vital to play as a specific character.

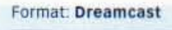




Fur Fighters has a deathmatch mode where up to four players can take part in the appropriately titled 'Fluffmatches'. Its not its strongest suit







Format: **Dreamcast**

Publisher: **Acclaim**

Developer: **Bizarre Creations**

Price: **£40**

Release: **June**





***Fur Fighters'* environments are full of interactive scenery, allowing you to use weapons and cunning to discover – or blast open – hidden areas**



The intuitive control system has the action buttons controlling directions, triggers for jumping and shooting. The analogue stick moves the camera

Again, like *DK64*, this switching between characters introduces not just variety, but elementary puzzle content. Crossing a body of water, for example, requires the swimming talents of Rico the penguin, while paw marks on platforms suggest Juliette the cat's climbing ability will come in handy. Other Fur Fighters include Roofus the Scottie dog, who can dig through soft earth to reach new areas, and Tweek the baby dragon, who hasn't yet learned to fly, but can glide across gaps *à la* Spyro.

This ragbag bunch of furry heroes must take on 24 massive levels full of baddies to shoot, puzzles to solve and platforms to negotiate, in a game so full of fun and invention that it's a real breath of fresh air on Sega's machine. The gaming environments are all beautifully realised. From a bustling metropolis called New Quack City, to Dinotopolis – a dinosaur-sized house with gigantic furniture to negotiate – it's certainly varied. These environs are, predictably, teeming with Viggo's anthropomorphic henchmen.

With its appropriate, considered aesthetics, the comedy violence of *Fur Fighters* is worthy of note. It often has the feel of a subversive interactive cartoon, with its cutesy characters blasting each other with big guns, and oozing fluff rather than gore with successful hits. It is replete with thoughtful touches. For example, each Fur Fighter has its own theme tune, the daft character voices are reminiscent of Charlie the cat (from the '70s safety adverts) and baddies fulfil a comedy imperative when they turn on their heels at the sight of intimidating firepower. This is a title with genuine personality.

Fur Fighters is one of the best titles available on Dreamcast. It's an all too infrequent joy to come across a videogame designed with such thought, with so many different ideas and challenges. It has an intelligently judged balance between shooting, puzzling and platforming, and there are even several bonus games on each level.

With its appropriate, considered aesthetics, the comedy violence of ***Fur Fighters* is worthy** of note. **It often has the feel of a** subversive interactive cartoon

Thus far, the Dreamcast's most noteworthy fare has invariably been enjoyable but short-lived arcade conversions. DC owners now have less cause to cast covetous glances at similarly styled adventures on other formats, because *Fur Fighters* is a title bursting at the seams with entertainment and lasting appeal. With more satisfying multiplayer gameplay (the Fluffmatch mode can prove frustrating in practice) it would have been a welcome surprise of even greater stature.

Edge rating:

Eight out of ten

ECCO THE DOLPHIN: DEFENDER OF THE FUTURE









Due to the dolphin's reckless insistence on remaining a mammal while living in the sea, Ecco's air supply must be replenished by surfacing or seeking out air streams



Playing an aquatic Doctor Dolittle, it's possible to 'sing' to other sea creatures, asking them to help. New challenges accompany new allies

Amid a fresh wave of public angst over violence in videogames, an aquatic adventure featuring a friendly dolphin seems perfectly in tune with the current zeitgeist. *Ecco the Dolphin: Defender of the Future* is Sega's latest 1.5party title, coded by Hungary's Appaloosa Interactive, with deep financial and creative involvement from the publisher.

A second sequel to 1995's million-selling Mega Drive *Ecco the Dolphin*, this new iteration lands Ecco with another battle to save the Earth. Plotted by sci-fi scribe David Brin (http://www.kithrup.com/brin/main.htm), the story is set against a background of imminent invasion by 'The Foe', the efforts of which are brought to a head when the great crystal that shields Earth is shattered by an attack.

Ecco's quest begins in a peaceful bay, where various other dolphins and a pair of whales conspire to teach the basics of steering sea mammals. Assorted twists, turns, charges and fish-catching are all within repertoire, and all astoundingly well animated. However, just as in other titles which ask the player to navigate a 360 degree space it is sometimes easy to lose sense of which way is up – especially in some of the darker, more cavernous stages.

Aside from bearing names redolent of bad 1980s metal bands ('Seeds of Poison' and 'Sleeping Forces of Doom' are two of 34 hilarious entries), the stages are vague in design from early stages onwards. Undermined by the need to maintain a realistically murky draw distance, the

There's a slackness in *Ecco the Dolphin*'s design. Ambitious gamers will **undoubtedly find their way through but its family-friendly themes** will place it in less able hands



Hitting these switches raises and lowers the water level in a cylinder within a giant pumping station, allowing you to pass to later levels





Format: **Dreamcast**

Publisher: **Sega**

Developer: **Appaloosa**

Price: **£40**

Release: **June**



level designers needed to lead the player by the (bottle) nose. They chose not to. While a temporary map can be summoned by holding down Ecco's crackling sonar blast, it intrudes too heavily on the action to be of much use. Larger areas often need touring several times before they become familiar – a time- and patience-consuming flaw common to most maze-based games.

Curiously, Ecco is able to exit certain areas without having completed key tasks, some of which provide information needed for later stages. There's a slackness in the game's design which lurks in its murky waters like a boat's chain, waiting for players to tangle themselves in it. Ambitious gamers will undoubtedly find their way through, but the family-friendly themes of Ecco will place it in less able hands.

Other aspects of the game are well conceived, such as the schools of fish which can be harnessed by Ecco to help him through situations. Once he's been taught the 'Song of Fish' by a fellow dolphin, the hero can squeak at the fish and they follow him. Light fish can be taken into dark caves to illuminate the way, poison fish can form a guarding ring. Others are simply food, used to recover energy, varying in colour and nutritious value.

Ecco's many foes, including The Foe, can be fought in various ways. The dolphin's primary attack is to charge his enemies, which are often sharks. Larger enemies have shockingly abrupt manoeuvres, often swallowing Ecco with a single gulp. It's also possible to collect a power-up for his sonar, creating a blast force to be reckoned with. However, like many of the game's other toys, there's no immediate and rewarding test bed for Ecco to try his new-found skills. Deficiencies like this draw the line between the work of the likes of NCL and that of the rest of the world.

There's no doubt that Appaloosa has built a wonderfully immersive game world, and the efforts of its animation team are impossible not to applaud. Tim Follin's musical score is also inspired, displaying a sensitivity to the title's demeanour too often lost on western videogame musicians. Huge fun can be had simply curling and spurting Ecco around his undersea world.

Ecco the Dolphin is a vast adventure, one that is sure to keep the player busy for longer than most of the Dreamcast's back catalogue added together. But there's an unfortunate blandness to the game beneath its glossy visuals. Actions need clearer, more rewarding consequences; levels strand you where they should direct. It simply lacks the vision that typifies similarly sprawling N64 epics.

Sega Europe's attempt to finance innovative, longer-lasting titles for the European market has so far borne three unusual and credible near-misses in *Red Dog*, *Toy Commander* and this game. More populist than any of its stablemates, the pressure is on *Metropolis Street Racer* to give its backer the triple-A hit it so badly needs. Roll on July.

Edge rating:

Seven out of ten





Later stages wash Ecco through alien craft and massive industrial complexes, all layered with a remarkable amount of graphic detail

DOGS OF WAR

Format: **PC**

Publisher: **Take Two**

Developer: **Silicon Dreams**

Price: **£30**

Release: **Out now**





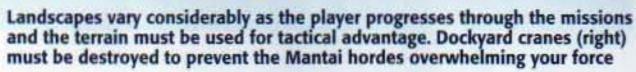












Landscapes vary considerably as the player progresses through the missions and the terrain must be used for tactical advantage. Dockyard cranes (right) must be destroyed to prevent the Mantai hordes overwhelming your force





A game containing weaponry of any kind wouldn't be complete without the sniper rifle. Players can zoom into their prey using the window, bottom left

For a game priding itself on the title 'action tactics', *Dogs of War* disappoints by falling somewhat short in both departments. While **Edge** acknowledges that there is a beautifully crafted and powerful game engine driving the whole experience, the title's individual parts, like so many inexperienced troops, hold the game back from crushing all opposition in its path.

Some players may be discouraged by the fact that the game offers short missions rather than an escalating war. Though Silicon Dreams has patently opted to steer clear of battles which take an evening to complete, *Dogs of War* levels tend to be too short – just when the game gets going, the mission is over. *Dogs of War* offers a series of skirmishes rather than an ongoing blood-and-guts campaign.

The difficulty balance is also somewhat uneven. While early missions auger well, delivering clear objectives with just enough resources to complete the task, later missions can prove far too easy.

From the outset of *Dogs of War* the player can control two factions: the Warmonkeys and The Imperial Order. Once eight missions for each have been completed an additional faction, the Mantai race, opens up. Taking its inspiration from 'Starship Troopers', Silicon Dreams has invented an alien race of bugs in the Mantai which are profoundly different both tactically and aesthetically to the previous two groups on offer.

The Mantai offer a range of strategic options, and while enemy AI is at times basic (mostly following preset routines) the individual levels do offer a good deal of variety. One excellent example leaves the player in control of a lone gunner. In a section reminiscent of *Metal Gear Solid* he must sneak around a prison complex, destroy a generator and free his army.

This is all controlled via a 3D overhead camera which is both intuitive and smooth. Individual units can be controlled directly by a single click of a mouse button and the press of the return key. Unfortunately this is all too often necessary as units assigned commands can get snagged on environmental debris – choosing to take a route directly to the destination rather than going around objects. This rather asks the player to become a nanny, not a field marshal.

Have the patience to live with such niggly frustrations and *Dogs of War* can be an enjoyable romp. It is just a pity that the game tries so hard to camouflage a subtler beauty at its core.

Edge rating:

Seven out of ten

SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR

Format: **PC**

Publisher: **Electronic Arts**

Developer: **Creative Assembly**

Price: **£35**

Release: **June 16**



The bitmapped graphics don't bear close scrutiny. However, they convey carnage on an unparalleled scale







***Shogun* is bolstered by a refined oriental aesthetic. Cut-scenes are inspired by the work of Japanese director Akira Kurosawa and the front-end is as sharp as a Samurai's katana. Only the battles aren't minimalist**

Few gaming seams have been mined as ruthlessly as realtime strategy. The genre is so artistically exhausted that anything atypical is seized upon as evidence of a revival. The novelty in *Shogun: Total War*'s case is that it has successfully managed to realise and blend several ideas tried to no avail in other titles, and has come up with a possible prototype for the future of the genre.

Shogun is based on the colour, imagery and intrigue of 16th century Japan, with the player controlling the resources of a historical clan. The eventual aim via battlefield conquests, territorial acquisition and diplomacy is to expand the clan's influence until its leader (the Daimyo) is acknowledged as Shogun of Japan. Borrowing from the mechanics of boardgames, a Risk-style mosaic of provinces provides the backdrop for the combat. Here army pieces are moved across a map of Japan with turn-based luxuriousness. Infrastructure may be developed, troops recruited, intelligence gathered and plans hatched. But once a territory is targeted for hostile takeover, *Shogun* switches to a 3D environment for a tactical resolution.

The forces mustered in the strategic section are placed at your realtime disposal in battle scenes that are heavily inspired by traditional wargames. The emphasis is on ritualistic combat, with strict rules governing the action. Troop types each have their place in the food chain, and marshalling them correctly, rather than improvising ad hoc solutions, is key. A number of preprogrammed formations simplify command of the army, though the fickle interface still leaves some control issues unresolved.

Terrain also plays an unusually important role. Like a golf green, it's the lie of the land that's important, and the starkly defined lines of the battlefields enable the player to spot defensible high ground, ambush spots and outflanking opportunities.

The design elements force the player to fight disciplined battles that take their cue from warfare proper. It requires more commitment than the average *C&C* bash, but *Shogun* succeeds on three fronts: scale, AI and involvement. The bitmapped troops can be shunted around the screen in their thousands. Wheeling blocks of troops collide and end up heaps of messy dead – perfectly depicting the carnage of warfare. *Shogun*'s simple rules of combat are ideal for the CPU and it puts up a credible challenge compared to other RTS games. Finally, the wedding of strategic scheming with realtime combat creates a campaign far more involving than any 'story'-based game.

Shogun is no title for the *C&C* dilettante. It's a serious strategic undertaking that points the way ahead – a less light-hearted route, but one that's far more rewarding than the old RTS formula.

Edge rating:

Eight out of ten





The plot is determined by moves in the strategic section and is resolved by play in the tactical section

KIRBY 64: THE CRYSTAL SHARDS

Format: **N64**

Publisher: **Nintendo**

Developer: **HAL Laboratory**

Price: **¥5,800 (£35)**

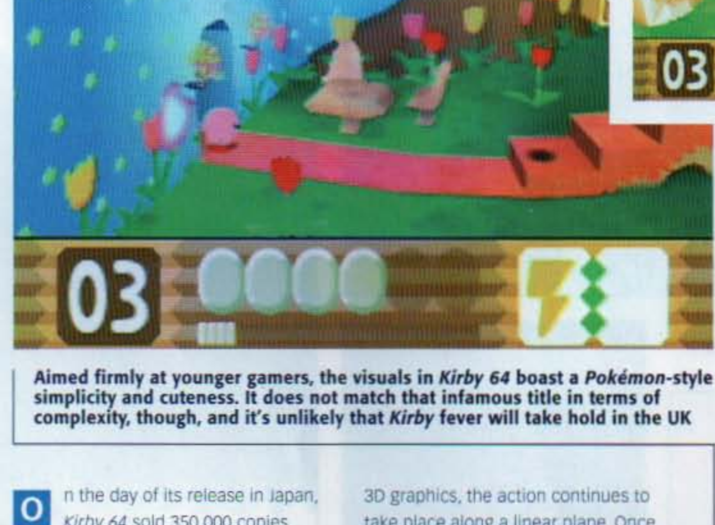
Release: **Out now (Japan)**







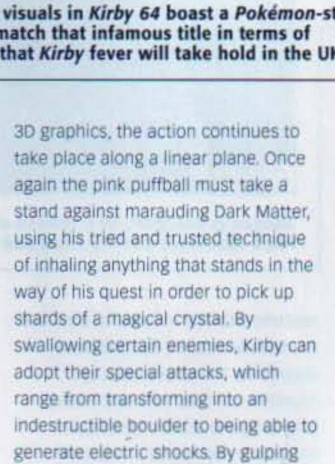
Avoiding falling wardrobes (above) and riding piggyback (top) are just some of the skills that must be mastered to see off the Dark Matter



Aimed firmly at younger gamers, the visuals in *Kirby 64* boast a *Pokémon*-style simplicity and cuteness. It does not match that infamous title in terms of complexity, though, and it's unlikely that *Kirby* fever will take hold in the UK

On the day of its release in Japan, *Kirby 64* sold 350,000 copies. Although there is a danger of developers becoming complacent in the face of such huge brand loyalty, the 64bit outings for Mario, Link and even Donkey Kong have each rewarded fans with inspired updates, making full use of three dimensions to push the gameplay envelope. But if fans of Kirby thought that their blob-like hero was going to enjoy similar treatment this time around, then they will be bitterly disappointed.

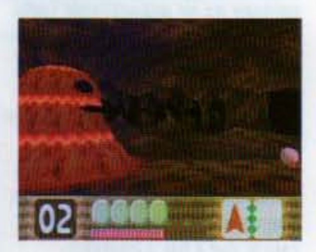
Developer and longtime Nintendo bedfellow HAL has avoided the headache of adding anything new to the structure of previous versions by realising the sequel in 2.5D. Featuring 3D graphics, the action continues to take place along a linear plane. Once again the pink puffball must take a stand against marauding Dark Matter, using his tried and trusted technique of inhaling anything that stands in the way of his quest in order to pick up shards of a magical crystal. By swallowing certain enemies, Kirby can adopt their special attacks, which range from transforming into an indestructible boulder to being able to generate electric shocks. By gulping two baddies at once players he can mix and match to obtain an even more diverse and enhanced range of arms.



Some levels offer variations on this basic theme, featuring sled or mine cart rides in which obstacles must be avoided, and levels are set in a wide range of environments with a large number of bosses. In short, *Kirby 64* takes the fundamental elements of the 2D versions and gives them a graphical sheen that befits the capabilities of the N64. But given the progress that has been made in platform gaming on Nintendo's console, and given the arrival of next generation hardware, this is all a tad underwhelming, even though the cutesy plot and appearance will undoubtedly serve to stimulate younger players.







There are a number of bosses and sub-bosses (above) to enliven proceedings. Sadly they fail to mount any real challenge

While a rehash may be enough for devotees of the series, the biggest problem lies not in the lack of originality, but rather the fact that the game is over too soon. Younger players attracted to this title may well have already honed their skills with more testing titles, and mature gamers will have no problem finishing the game in one sitting. There is simply not enough originality or longevity on offer for *Kirby 64* to stand out among the wealth of inventive platformers already available on the N64.

Edge rating:

Five out of ten



Action takes place in a number of environments. But despite the pretty graphics, there is little to distinguish this title from 2D platformers



NEMESIS

Known in its native Japan as *Gradius*, this horizontally scrolling shooter followed previous Konami legends such as *Scramble* into the coin-op hall of fame. In its day, encased in a nondescript, multipurpose cabinet, it had to sell on gameplay alone

This boss (main) – perhaps *Nemesis*'s most defining visual element – was oddly reminiscent of that of *Phoenix*, in that you could not reach its vulnerable weak spot without breaking through protective layers. Even then, only a direct hit would bring about its demise. Power-up pods were the game's currency (right)



The Easter Island heads (right) which vomited Polo-like projectiles at the player are classic images that few will ever forget. Levels which could be force-scrolled vertically (above) also added to the game's impact



It's difficult to be harsh with Konami for electing to mark the arrival of the first two videogame consoles from Sony with a variant of this, arguably the most influential shoot 'em up since the genre's golden age when the likes of *Galaxian*, *Phoenix* and *Moon Cresta* ruled the arcades.

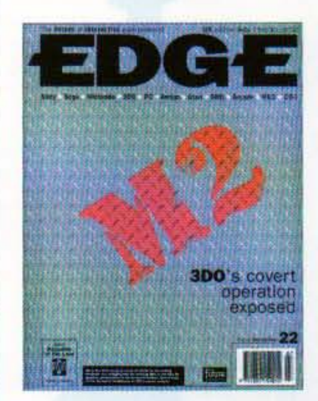
The game's defining factor was its elaborate power-up system, offering craft customisation in six flavours: 'speedup', 'missile', 'twoway', 'laser', 'option' and '?'. The label 'option' hardly gave any hint of what this legendary power-up did, however, as it produced a slave energy orb which mimicked your craft's actions. String four of them together and you had an all-powerful chain of laser-spitting blob sidekicks.

Without *Nemesis*, there may have been no *R-Type*. Having said that, though, there would be no *Parodius*, either. Which some would say isn't such a bad thing…

Manufacturer: Konami | 1985 | Coin-op/various

EDGEVIEW

The videogame world never stands still, riding the breaking wave of advancing technology. In this regular column Edge puts the industry's progress in perspective with a look at yesteryear's headlines: five years ago this month



Edge issue 22, July 1995

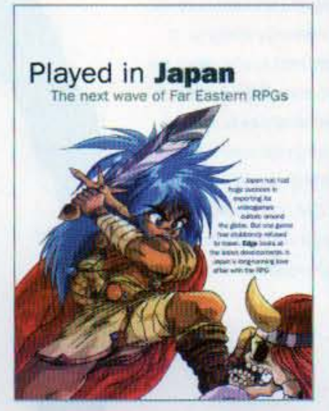


The Jaguar VR unit: about as fashionable as that abysmal purple sweater, as it turned out

The hunt for the Next Big Thing – irrespective of whether or not it would eventually become a reality or not – got the better of **Edge** when issue 22's cover played host to an industrial-looking backdrop over which editorial promised to offer a look into a new format which would 'take 3D graphics performance to new levels of realism'. Inside, **Mark Cerny**, president of Universal Interactive Studios, claimed that, with the M2 format, "we are entering an era where the primary limitation will be our imaginations." 'But 3DO is strictly limiting who gets to exploit this power' ran the next line of editorial. Did Sony's 'come one, come all' policy really look like such a bad idea to 3DO's management at this point?

Elsewhere in **E**22, another format with a so-called 'Dream Team' policy began to experience problems. "We have made a conscious decision not to rush the Nintendo Ultra 64 to market," said NOA chairman **Howard Lincoln**. An unconscious or subconscious decision on Nintendo's part would surely have led to *Mario 64* not being quite so amazing.

In other news, Atari released shots of its Jaguar VR unit. Needless to say, this little beauty never made it.









Clockwise from top left: Edge examines Japanese RPGs, predicting that they'll soon be making an impact in the UK; Trip Hawkins' new baby takes centre stage; M2 at work on a cow; the groundbreaking *Jumping Flash*

Did they really say that?

Interplay executive VP **Dick Lehrberg**: "M2 and its revolutionary design and groundbreaking features provide us with an excellent vehicle to deliver our software… and meet our goals to stay on the leading edge of this fast-paced industry." Not one for PR speak at all, then

Did Edge really say that?

Last line of ed intro: "The SNES deserved better." Sniff

Testscreens (and ratings)

Jumping Flash (PS; 7/10), *Gunner's Heaven* (PS; 6/10), *Astal* (Sat; 5/10), *Full Throttle* (PC; 9/10), *Flight Unlimited* (PC; 9/10), *Burn Out* (Jag; 4/10), *Slam 'n' Jam* (3DO; 7/10)

PIXELPERFECT

Every gamer has occasional moments of sparkling excitement, be it the first time *Speedball* booted up, or completing *Sabrewulf*. This month Oli Wright of Brain in a Jar remembers one good reason for buying an expensive microcomputer

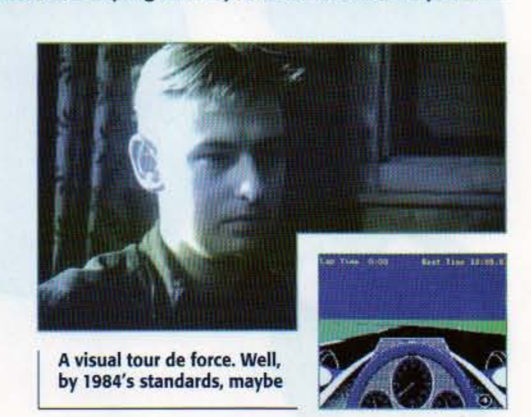
BBC Micros were only owned by kids with rich parents who thought little Johnny would get a head start by having a proper computer, not one of those toy Sinclair things. Fortunately I had a couple of friends with rich parents.

Revs was introduced to the world in 1984. The geeky school computer club was about to become the geeky *Revs* and *Elite* club. Most racing games up to this point didn't even have corners. Those that did were the wiggly, bendy road variety *à la Pole Position*. Here was a game that had proper circuits; you could see corners approaching (no pop-up) and plan your line through them. The tracks had hills, crests and dips. You could even drive the wrong way. Try doing that in *Pole Position*.

Then there was the car model. With adjustable aerodynamics, the car could slide and spin, you could launch the car over kerbs, and there was no automatic transmission for the skillfully challenged. *Revs* could rightfully call itself a simulation.

All this on an 8bit 2MHz 6502 at a time before the term '3D engine' was coined and polygons per second could be measured with a stopwatch. It would be many years before any other racing game even came close.

In a straight fight, Gloria Slap and Hugh Jengine would beat Schumacher and Hakkinen any day of the week.



A visual tour de force. Well, by 1984's standards, maybe



Microsoft's peripheral vision

US/UK: Microsoft will be adding two new products to its Sidewinder range of gaming peripherals in October. The first, targeted at strategy gamers, is the Strategic Commander, priced at £60. Consisting of a left-handed device, this is intended to supplement the keyboard and mouse by storing up to 72 commands. Users will be able to assign multiple tasks to one command and record commands during games, as the need arises. **Edge** is more excited about the Game Voice, though, which will enable players to taunt enemies, communicate with teammates and set up games over the Internet or a LAN. By using the headset and command pad with eight programmable buttons, online gamers can either chat or use voice commands to undertake simple tasks like reloading a weapon. Surely it's worth £50 to be able to insult your opponents in realtime?

A new way of shooting

UK: Designed primarily with firstperson shooters in mind, Saitek's latest peripheral transfers all of the functions usually assigned to the keyboard to an ergonomic pad boasting a raft of key combinations. Naturally, everything is programmable and while some of it is undeniably clever and makes life a little more convenient, it's not the most convincing argument for PC FPS players looking to invest £40 of their funds – though those finding keyboard controls rather fiddly may not currently find a better solution. **Edge**'s money would be on a console version, which would massively enhance the non-PC-based FPS experience.

The Game Voice module is made up of two elements (above and below left), while the Strategic Commander (below) is an all-in-one unit





Granskningsnamnden 0

Sweden: It looks increasingly likely that Sweden's youth will be prohibited from watching the *Pokémon* cartoon series. This special broadcasting attack may strangle the life out of Poliwhirl and Pikachu's total world domination before the craze reaches Scandanavian shores. Granskningsnamnden, the territory's TV watchdog, believes that the cartoon breaks the country's strict laws which ban ads aimed at children. "It could be disguised advertising, a means of furthering commercial interests," commented watchdog representative **Hack Kampmann**.



Vatican 1

Italy: The Vatican, meanwhile, has strongly endorsed the *Pokémon* phenomenon. Sat2000, the satellite television station run by the Italian Bishops' Conference from the Vatican, ruled that Pickachu and friends have 'no moral side effects' and focuses on the 'ties of friendship between the trainer and his Pokémon'. The fact that the cartoon series has gained a 60 per cent market share in the children's television audience does not disturb the Bishops, who see the simple stories encouraging children 'in the direction of imagination and inventiveness'. The newspaper *Corriere della Sera* commented: 'This is a true papal blessing for the latest craze'.



From one religion to another, *Pokémon* continues to divide public opinion. **Edge** failed to ascertain the Pope's current Pokémon count

Granny gets into Game Boy

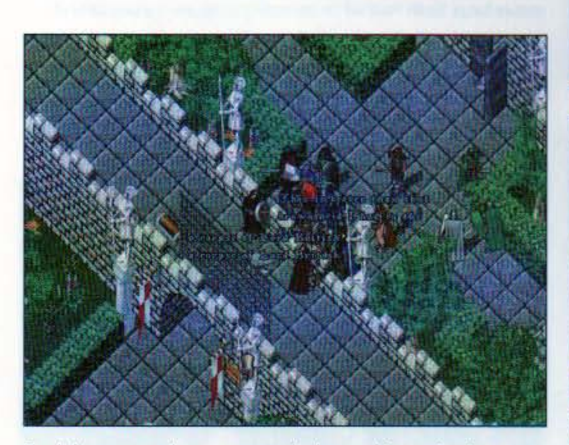
Japan: Nuyell, the sophisticated new sewing machine from Singer, has been developed to take advantage of Game Boy Color technology. Patterns can be drawn on the handheld and uploaded to the machine via the link cable. Alternatively, doilies and doll costumes can be created from 300 preprogrammed patterns. The system is released in May and will cost ¥50-60,000.





Ultima: Humiliation

US: American *Ultima* fanatics are up in arms about Origin's last two releases. While *Ultima: Ascension* was criticised for its numerous bugs, *Ultima Online: Renaissance* has suffered setbacks due to 'some of the most complex and elaborate code' ever to be published. To appease angry mobs the official *Ultima Online* Web site offered this apology: 'While we can delay the release to our servers, we cannot delay the retail release, and thus you may see the *OU: Renaissance* box on the shelves of your neighborhood software store'. One consumer's reply was unequivocal: '[Origin] have broken the bond of trust between gamer and corporation: that there's actually a game in the box you're purchasing'.







Rarely have gamers become as attached to anything as they have *Ultima Online*. Which means that if you're going to let them down…





Monster Tetris scales tower block

US: Part art experiment and part science project, the largest *Tetris* game in the world can now be played at Brown University, Rhode Island. Standing at 96 metres, the *Tetris* game beats a past Dutch effort at the Delft University and will enter the Guiness Book of World Records. The small team of 21 students at Tech House constructed the videogame screen by attaching more than 10,000 Christmas lights to wooden frames. The falling sequences are operated by 11 custom-build circuit boards and are run on a data network controlled by Linux. Bystanders have been eager to play the game, which was originally controlled with a SNES joypad – now sadly broken – since replaced with a keyboard.

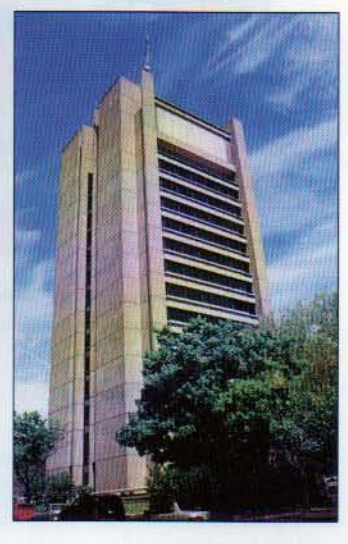
Keith Dreibelbis and Soren Spies, two of Tech House's design leaders, consider the project as both game and art installation. "The concept mainly has to do with hallucination from excessive video gaming," comments Dreibelbis. 'For anyone who has ever played way too much *Tetris* and looked at squarish buildings, it is easy to start hallucinating *Tetris* blocks in them." The cost of the project came in at under $1,000, but plans to hire a live band to play the *Tetris* music may up the bill considerably.





The *Tetris* art installation can be seen from the local freeway and has attracted a great deal of media attention. And no, the shuttle does not make an appearance





Female gaming grows up

US: Does *Mia Hamm Soccer 64* indicate a significant change in the way publishers view the female market? After *Barbie Super Sports* and *The Spice Girls* comes a game pitched towards females, yet with a distinctly more mature focus. South Peak will be attempting to tap into the popularity of the sport in the US where the women's national team not only holds the Olympic Gold but the 1999 World Cup trophy. It is expected that the game will model the players on their real-life counterparts, so don't expect much dumbing down. Whether or not the offside rule is included is another matter.







The American Women's World Cup-winning squad has taken the sport's popularity of the sport to new heights. Is this the holy grail method of tapping into female gamers' psyches?





Gadaffi and Hussein miss out on PS2

Japan: Fears that Japanese export restrictions would curtail Sony's ambition to ship three million units to both American and UK shores by the end of 2001 have been abated. Though shipment to 'neutral' countries will go ahead Iran, Iraq, Libya and North Korea will not officially be able to import Sony's console.

Trade Ministry Officials were concerned that the console architecture was similar to that used in missile guidance systems and didn't want the PS2 to fall into the wrong hands. In 1998 similar 'devices' for civilian use were found in a North Korean submarine sunk by the South Korean military. Missile guidance systems often use mounted cameras which feed back images to a remote firing station; the trajectory can then be adjusted by an operator. Commenting on possible military use **Kenichi Fukunaga** said: "We could not compromise because of the fierce competition in the industry."



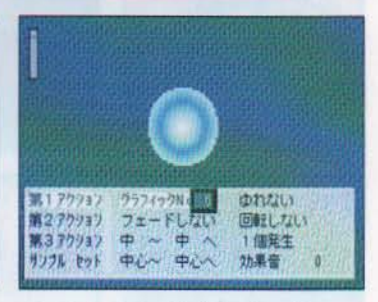
Japanese Trade Ministry Officials are concerned that PlayStation2 could be used for military purposes. Is this an elaborate hype machine at work, or what?

Wanted: dungeon builders









Though players will not be able to craft a game to quite the level of sophistication found in *Final Fantasy VIII*, *RPG Maker* may inspire the next generation of Miyamotos to a small degree

US: Agetec, the developer responsible for *Fighter Maker* on the PlayStation, is set to release the long-anticipated *RPG Maker* for the format. Cancelled three times already, the construction kit is old news in Japan, where it is already into its third incarnation. Though the conversion is based on the most up-to-date version, it's likely to only be released in America. The versatile game allows for the customisation of stories, environments, party systems, monsters and dialogue. The data is stored on a standard memory card and can be exchanged with friends who also own a copy of the game.

Emulation: the next step

UK: Those who have enough space and a desperarate yearning to play 16bit coin-op classics on their Pentium-powered PC may be interested in the ArcadePC. The cabinet is supplied replete with its own built-in 19" hi-resolution monitor and joystick panel. Just plug in your PC, which fits neatly into the bottom section, and you can relive those joyous afternoons spent in the chip shop while bunking off school. The ArcadePC retails at £900 and comes bundled with a CD-ROM containing the latest version of *MAME* and Capcom classics such as *UN Squadron*, *MERCs*, *Strider*, *Ghouls 'n' Ghosts* and *Side Arms*. Visit **www.arcadepc.com** for more information.







Clockwise from main: *Ghouls 'n' Ghosts*, *Side Arms* and *UN Squadron*. Sadly, you'll have to apply authentic cigarette burns to the ArcadePC (right) yourself





Taking an ad break, Dreamcast style

Japan: Videogame TV ads from Japan have been given the spotlight within these pages on more than one occasion in the past. Their recent MIA status has been down to few noteworthy examples turning up. Now, *Space Channel 5* and *Typing of the Dead* spots make amends…



1. [Typing] 'The… **2.** '… li…' **3.** '… ttle…' **4.** '… gir…' **5.** SFX: clatter of keyboard. "Ooaaooh!" **6.** SFX: more keyboard clatter. **7.** "You are… You are so fast!" **8.** "Have you seen her?" **9.** Zombie: 'Aaargh!' **10.** "Ahahahah!" **11.** VO: "Exterminate all the zombies!" **12.** "*Typing of the Dead*!"



1. Opens on ballet school scene, to classical ballet music audio accompaniment. **2.** SFX: *Bioiiing!* **3.** "Tchu! Tchu! Tchu!" **4.** "Okay, let's get him!" **5.** "Up, down, up, down!" **6.** "Tchu! Tchu! Tchu!" **7.** "Up, down, up, down!" **8.** "Tchu! Tchu! Tchu!" **9.** [Voiceover] "You too can be a dance master…" **10.** "… and push the aliens back!" **11.** "*Space Channel 5*!" **12.** "It's a total failure! I cannot stop!"

DataStream



UK mobile phone users in 1990: **500,000**
UK mobile phone users in 2000: **18m**
Number of *Pokémon Stadiums* (above) purchased in the two days following UK launch: **42,000**
Average number of PlayStation2 units sold in Japan per day: **45,455**
Average number of Dreamcast units sold in Japan per day: **8,145**
Percentage of Dreamcast owners registered on the Sega Dreamcast Network: **20%**
Number of consumers an *MCV* poll discovered would not like a job in the interactive entertainment industry: **1 in 4**
Estimated amount of money ELSPA believed was lost to piracy last year: **$3bn**
Percentage of people Data Facts Inc found to falsify job applications: **35%**
Amount of industrial fatalities Data Facts Inc discovered were linked to alcohol consumption: **40%**
Percentage of young professionals asked out for a date via email according to a recent survey: **70%**
Percentage of young professionals asked out for a date via phone: **40%**







DAVID HOLMES
Bow Down To The Exit Sign (Go Beat)

The third in a trilogy of superb British albums which have redefined the rock/dance blueprint over the past year. After Death In Vegas' 'Contino Sessions' and Primal Scream's 'Xtrmntr', 'Bow Down To The Exit Sign' is a more elated affair, but still swallows its fair share of sleaze. Bobby G guests on 'Sick City' (this album's 'Accelerator') and Holmes has assembled an excellent all-star cast of his own which includes Blues Explosion frontman Jon Spencer and ex-Tricky chanteuse Martina. The result is an album of phenomenal, cinematic scope, grimy cool and effortless funk.



AMON TOBIN
Supermodified (Ninja Tune)

No wonder Tobin's last 12" featured a Chris Morris collaboration – the unnerving shudders of 'Supermodified' are exactly the music you'd expect to find lurking beneath the toenails of 'Blue Jam'. It all begins rather coquettishly with the joyous jazz jumble of 'Get Your Snack On' and 'Four Ton Mantis', but it's soon apparent that this is another Ninja Tune artiste with darker and more devious intentions.



BELLE & SEBASTIAN
Fold Your Hands Child, You Walk Like A Peasant (Jeepster)

Fourth proper album from the winsome Scottish ensemble. The blossoming of a strong Northern Soul influence has toughened up their sound, but if you've always hated Belle & Sebastian's insular indie racket, this won't change your mind. If, however, you've seen beyond their fey posturing to some of the most poignant songs ever penned in anger, 'Fold Your Hands...' serves up more of the same.



DVD: DEEP BLUE SEA
(Warner Home Video) £20

It's sometimes difficult to like Renny Harlin's work. All of his directorial efforts ('Cliffhanger', 'Die Hard 2', 'The Long Kiss Goodnight') share the same lack of refinement that alienates as many viewers as it attracts. While 'Deep Blue Sea' is no different, it manages to push the implausibility stakes to a new level.

Keen to find a cure for Alzheimer's disease, scientists on an underwater lab decide to genetically enhance the brains of captive sharks. Trouble is, this increases their size, agility, intelligence and appetite. Before you can spot the first (of many) plot holes, much screaming, frantic swimming and diluted blood permeates the screen. It can all be very enjoyable for all the wrong reasons, though you could argue that's all you're looking for sometimes.

Technically the picture is finely detailed and free of artefacts, and the 5.1 sonics keep your speakers in constant check. Extras (commentary, 'making of' featurettes, deleted scenes and a stills gallery) complete the package.



Editor: **Richard Preston**
Publisher: **Laurence King**
ISBN: **1856692078**

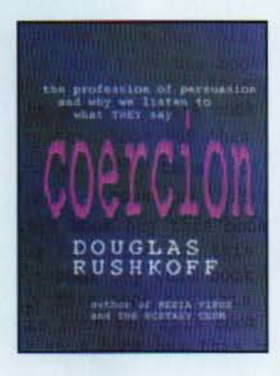
WOW WOW

Potted opinion about Web sites is easy to find. Everyone from the broadsheets to *Big Issue* sellers have a handful of favourites they'd gladly tell you about. Even **Edge**'s premium space has room for one worthy site review. But where do you go for a more thorough appraisal of what lurks in the bizarre and alternative corners of the Web?

'Wow Wow' is a collection of shortish essays on obscure sites that hark back to the old-school Web, way before the Lastminutes and the Amazon.coms. Here is commentary on how to get a husband online, boob flashers in Disneyland, and the little-known man-o-man goings on up at Sun Hill in a spoof script for 'The Bill'.

The essays are by turns funny, silly, serious and plain odd – with a few screen grabs thrown in – and say as much about the authors as they do about the sites. This vanity-fare was probably encouraged by its editors, the art-school boys responsible for cult magazine *Fuel*.

The sites, much like the posse of reviewers, are a mixed bag: some shallow and flippant, others thought-provoking or perceptive, all tend to the eccentric. There are 48 contributors in all, mostly journalists and artists, sporting their culture-vulture shades as they wax lyrical about their chosen URLs. An ideal accompaniment to a latte.



Author: **Douglas Rushkoff**
Publisher: **Little and Brown**
ISBN: **0316854034**

COERCION

What made you pick up this magazine? Was it the slick design? Independent opinion? Do you think it's because you wanted to? Wrong. It's because you were coerced into buying it. The image '**Edge** reader' flattered your sensibilities by subtle techniques rooted in counter-culture cool and independent image. Yet Future Publishing – **Edge**'s owner – has thoroughly commercial motives. Still think yours is an independent opinion? In 'Coercion: The Persuasion Professionals and Why We Listen to What They Say' Douglas Rushkoff argues very few decisions you make aren't heavily affected by commercial agendas.

Rushkoff is a seasoned media watcher and a long-time columnist for *The Guardian* and *The New York Times*. In the mid '90s his book 'Media Virus' became hot with ad executives and movers and shakers in marketing. Flattered by the interest, he explained to them how the Internet would emancipate the masses. And while he spoke the suits made notes and planned ways of turning his theory on its head to subvert the subverters.

The anticorporate movement felt betrayed, made Rushkoff a pariah and allegations circulated he was earning $7,500 per hour as a consultant, which he denies.

Now he's out to set the record straight. In a more cautious, cynical tone he recounts his engaging story. In his view advertisers, image makers and media manipulators have co-opted Generation-X cynicism in their campaigns to great effect, even pointing at computer games as culprits. Rushkoff has been up early brewing; now wake up and smell the coffee.



VIEWPOINT

EXPRESS YOURSELF IN **EDGE** – WRITE TO: LETTERS, **EDGE**, 30 MONMOUTH STREET, BATH BA1 2BW (email: edge@futurenet.co.uk)

It seems that the more things change, the more they stay the same. A reader of **Edge** since issue one, I'm struck by bizarre déjà vu reading the last several issues. It's almost like a typical Hollywood sequel, with bored movie producers re-using the original script: Sega unleashes new platform, the industry anticipating it will be trounced by a more powerful Sony machine following soon behind (which it does), while Nintendo lags so far behind it finds the battle already lost when its (albeit more powerful) machine belatedly appears.

I'm a victim of this strange repetition of events myself. Tempted but not convinced by Saturn/ Dreamcast, I preorder my PSX/PS2. Read the previews/reviews of Jap PSX/PS2 software with increasing excitement. No doubt on launch day I shall plug in my PS2, thrill to the joys of *Ridge Racer V* and *Wipeout Fusion* just as I did with the original *Ridge Racer* and *Wipeout* on day one of the PSX – only this time around I've got a few more inches on my waistline and a few more grey hairs on my head.

It gets worse. A year or more after PS2, seduced by sexy graphics and the endearing rep of its software, I purchase a Dolphin. I thrill to great gameplay after being jaded by too many sequels on PS2, then get only more jaded by lack of software support for the Nintendo machine in the wake of the market superiority of Sony. Fast forward a few more years. Sega announces new machine. Rumours abound of PS3. Nintendo's machine fades to obscurity as the next-next-generation hype begins.

I mean, really. Pretty soon you guys might as well forgo original copy and just reprint **Edge** from issue one. Maybe you are already…

Ian C Smith,
via email

Fear not, unless anyone *demands* a second look at issue 36's eight-page special on the future of data storage, **Edge** reprints won't happen.

Fascinating **Edge** article recently on game length ['Size Matters', **E**82]. It has become apparent to me that the computer game industry has a misguided notion of value for money. There are many more gamers in their 30s nowadays. Most of us don't have time to diligently explore the vastness of *Zelda 64* et al and end up abandoning the thing (yes, I confess it: my journey ended at the Water Temple. I couldn't play the game for a couple of weeks, returned to it, and became so confused by the legacy of half-solved puzzles I threw down the controller forever).

Most of us wouldn't think twice about downing 50 quid on a night out so why should we feel cheated by 50 quid for a couple of nights in? A tightly constructed game delivering 10-15hrs would be a great deal more satisfying and manageable than 40 hours of dazed wanderings strung out across weeks. Perhaps I'm just getting old.

Jake,
via email



Scott Scott says *MGS* takes strides towards reality – and bigger ones are on their way

'Yes, I confess it: my journey in *Zelda 64* ended at the **Water Temple. I couldn't** play the game for a **couple of weeks,** returned to it and **became so confused** I packed it in'

I disagree with L Piper's predictions (Viewpoint, **E**83) that games with emotional content will become the stuff of dreams or niche market. Emotional content goes beyond that which the gamer is able to express through their keyboard or joypad; it is influenced by environment; a character's development through behaviour; reactions and impulses to circumstances. The physics of these environments and character behaviour can be programmed, but current console technology has its limitations when emulating the real world (look to *MGS* as an example of the best a console has achieved – Dreamcast is yet to deliver an equivalent). In essence, the marriage between hardware, software, consumer demand, and expendable income has not yet been consummated, but we aren't a million miles away.

Anyway, I shall return to my bottle of Bud and gawking at Ms Croft's growing assets.

Scott Scott,
via email



The problem that both many of your readers and Sega themselves have is that the Dreamcast is a console for hardcore gamers and that to me is a great pity as Sega has always produced fun, rewarding games. I would much rather play a pick-up-and-play game such as *Crazy Taxi* than a game that is trying soooo hard to not be a game, like *FFVII*.

With the games now being released on Dreamcast it becomes absolutely clear that the console is aimed at the hardcore gamer. What 12-year-old will go out and buy a fishing rod controller along with *Sega Bass Fishing*? What kid will pay £70 for a game that uses a maraca controller? None. The people who will, though, are those who have grown up with the company,

game obsessives, or those who can look past the simple gameplay mechanics, the not so mind-blowing graphics and see what lies inside – and if it is a Sega conversion it normally means it's a damn fine title.

That person to me is the hardcore gamer, the person who isn't won over by multimillion pound advertising budgets, who doesn't buy the game on the basis that the screenshots on the back look good, or simply because everyone else has it, the person who can see a game for what it is – some fun – instead of trying to introduce emotions and PR waffle into the equation. A hardcore gamer is a Sega gamer and I for one am proud to be called one!

The Rock,
via email

Finding myself short of a few readies quite recently, I decided to take another look at my modest game collection. Regrettably, I had to admit to myself that I'd not actually completed any one of them. Since I've always been very selective about the games I buy my collection can be described as comprising mostly 'A-class' titles across the three major console platforms. Hence, I could give myself no real excuse for not trying to make a go of any of these games. This, I think, is a situation many of your readers will also find themselves in. It's always so tempting to move on to the next major release, setting aside any current game 'for future completion' – a date that, in my experience, becomes ever-more unlikely.

So, I picked up *Sonic Adventure* and began to replay the game – this time with the avowed intention of getting my money's worth out of what is, after all, a quite excellent game. What a revelation. I never realised I had such an accomplished and joyously entertaining game in my possession. I've similarly rediscovered the delights of *Jet Force Gemini* and the entire PlayStation *Colony Wars* trilogy. And that lot is just for starters.

But this approach to my game collection has had other benefits. Now I think I have much better grasp of the value of a game. Certainly, as a consequence, I understand what is really meant by 'replayability value'. For me, a truly 'A-class' title will reward the player no matter how long or how often the player chooses to stay with it. Games like *Zelda*, *Sonic* and *Jet Force* fall easily into this category. Other games, such as *Ridge Racer Type 4*, *Crazy Taxi* and *Wipeout 3* offer me instant gaming hits, with a minimum of fuss, and continue to justify their place in my collection.

Perhaps I am one of the last to see the light, but just in case I'm not I do urge your readers to take a similar re-evaluation of their current game collection. You might be very pleasantly surprised by what gems you have tucked away at the back of the shelf. Why not pick out one or two choice titles and set yourself the challenge of actually seeing them through to their final levels?

I feel as if my original investments in those games is really paying off as I delve ever deeper into them – and my appreciation of just what it is that makes so many of these games worthwhile is reward enough for choosing to purchase them in the first place.

Phil Ford,
via email

Finding the time to even sample new games every week, let alone play them to completion, is becoming more difficult as more publishers and platforms enter the fray. Think about it: in a year's time there will be six formats vying for development support. Something will have to give.

'Hopefully Nintendo will will have learned through experience and **produce a console** that is **competitive in terms** of attracting both **developers and consumers** alike'

"Playstation2 is all powerful," the developers cry as they lunge for their development kits. Quite a sorry state of affairs for poor old Nintendo and Sega who saw their last consoles die as a result of non-existent thirdparty support.

Hopefully Nintendo will have learned through experience and produce a console that is competitive in terms of attracting both developers and consumers alike. They know now that their own titles (regardless of quality) are not enough to sell a system alone and require support from companies like EA and Square in order to capture the market (I'd like to see how far PS2 would get without those two developing for it!). No one who plays videogames really wants Sony to monopolise the industry, because lack of competition always turns out to be bad for the consumer (just look at Microsoft). Of course, the future isn't as set as Sony would like us to believe. The market has changed since the days when the PlayStation ruled and it seems that only Sony hasn't changed with the market.

Connectivity will play a key role in the next round and only Sony is waiting for broadband to arrive (if it ever does). This leaves the door wide open for the big N and Sega, because multiplayer gaming is the future market that only they will have access to. Give me *Quake III* on the Dreamcast and I'll go out and buy one right now, it's as simple as that. Once people realise how superior the multiplayer experience is, they'll look back on singleplayer games as 'so '90s'. And when broadband does arrive, they can release a broadband modem for the minority of users who will have the service.

The Dolphin has the opportunity to achieve set-top box status very quickly if it plays DVD movies and is online from the start. Dreamcast was designed as a games machine but as yet has not received sufficient high-quality products. I'm sure it has enough grunt to compete with the Sony machine, but it's suffering from the same problem as the N64 – Sega can't carry it alone. Hopefully the N64's death (despite the quality software produced for it) was an alarm bell that rang loud in Nintendo's ears, and they'll market the next machine with a different audience in mind. Sony won the last round on impulse buys by 'twentysomethings' and shifted the market appropriately.

Neil Munro,
via email

Just want to say a BIG thank you for setting the story straight on the whole PS2 situation. Finally, somebody has had the guts to stand up to the hype, and deliver reviews on the merits of gameplay, rather than flashy graphics and media hype. I was beginning to think that I was the only person on the planet that could see through the hype machine, and realise that Sony haven't delivered anywhere near the goods it was claiming to (ie, emotion in games). For a console that was supposed to revolutionise the industry, all Sony have manage to deliver are bloated versions of games that already exist on the ageing PlayStation (*RRV*, *TTT*, *SFEX*, etc). I just feel that it's a great shame that the real innovators in this industry (Sega and Nintendo) seem to be left by the wayside while the mass market suck up to anything with a Sony badge on it. I won't be buying a PS2 until Sony delivers something at least half as good as the brilliance that is *Shenmue*.

Mark Buckland, via email

The early software has certainly disappointed, but it's unfair to blame Sony, whose in-house developers produced *Fantavision*, not *TTT*, *RRV* or *SFEX3*, for that.

As suspected, the Japanese PlayStation2 launch was populated by rushed, wholly inadequate titles. Dreamcast, in comparison, has had the most quality titles at launch (and soon thereafter) of any console, ever.

How long before people stop following the Sony PS2 trail blindly? As I've said before, I bought a Dreamcast on the day (at midnight in fact) of its launch. I won't be buying a PS2 until they come up with at least five good titles. I haven't seen one on sale yet, and don't envisage there being five quality titles by the time of the UK launch in September – or, as is rumoured, in the New Year.

Sony executives must be laughing all the way to the bank. What must Sega do to counter? What they are doing already. Will it work? No. But the gamers should keep the faith, and at least we buy quality rather than the next PS update for no good reason.

Martin-Pierre, via email

I was under the impression that videogames were starting to go mainstream. After seeing the recent Dispatches 'documentary' on Channel 4, I wonder if things have moved on at all. Never have I witnessed what I see as such a hatchet job on gaming. Putting aside all the obvious arguments that there is a sizeable chunk of the market now over 18, my depression stems from the fact that journalists can have such a short memory. Sex and violence in society has always had to be given a fall guy rather than addressing issues. A century ago, violent books were condemned by the establishment. Then the knives were turned on films and eventually videos of the day. It seems that computer entertainment is next.

For a programme offering such 'new' discoveries about the evils of *Time Crisis* etc there should be a balanced opinion from both sides of the trenches. Where were the industry visionaries so often featured in **Edge**, who can offer a stout defence over such sensationalist attacks? I am all for a balanced debate if the public cries out for one. But what will next week's edition focus on – perhaps the correlation between smoking Marlboro cigarettes and divorce statistics? The mind boggles.

David Walker, Norfolk

Videogames don't lead to violent behaviour? You've never seen four members of the **Edge** team play *International Track & Field*.

'**I am all for** balanced debate if the public cries out for one. But **what will next week's** edition focus on – the **the correlation** between **smoking Marlboro** and divorce statistics?'

Gameplay advancement is a big issue at the moment, be it in racing, sports or action titles. In most games I am supposed to be a hero/sportsman/whatever with all the abilities of the best in universe but all my senses are being deprived by the fact that I (the player) am disembodied from the entire experience. Sound may provide warnings to me in stereo, but not exactly where the danger is coming from. My 'natural' response would be to turn my head, but I can only move my mouse. We all know stereo speakers do not provide the same information as ears do in the real world and TVs don't show 180-degree images. For instance, when being shot at in *Hidden & Dangerous*, the character I'm playing should automatically turn in the direction of the danger, so that I can at least have the chance/time to avoid it – like in real life.

Being outside of a world looking in I need all the aids possible – because using a mouse to react to entire virtual environment is the equivalent of being paralysed from the neck down. When every enemy actually 'lives' and 'breathes' in this world, we are very lucky that most computer enemies are thoroughly stupid and stand and let you shoot them. Artificial Sensory Assistance (ASA), *not* just AI, is the future of gameplay. Us 'tunnel-visioned, deaf and crippled' gameplayers playing against ultimately intelligent computer AI in two years' time? We don't stand a chance.

With ASA games can become not easier, but more convincing and enabling, and therefore *fairer* and less frustrating. In turn the market may well expand further because ASA will make games far more intuitive and accessible. More importantly people can begin to rely on real world experience rather than just a primitive virtual experience when they play. We should all have a better chance to win. This isn't because I'm a bad game player, I just don't like being killed by something I could have avoided if I'd been equipped with all my natural senses.

Jason Wells, via email

This is an interesting one. As far as interacting with videogames goes, an awful lot of effort is going into changing established processes. Look out for a feature on this very topic in a future issue.



Next month: **Microsoft, Sony, Sega, Nintendo and Edge** @ E3


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